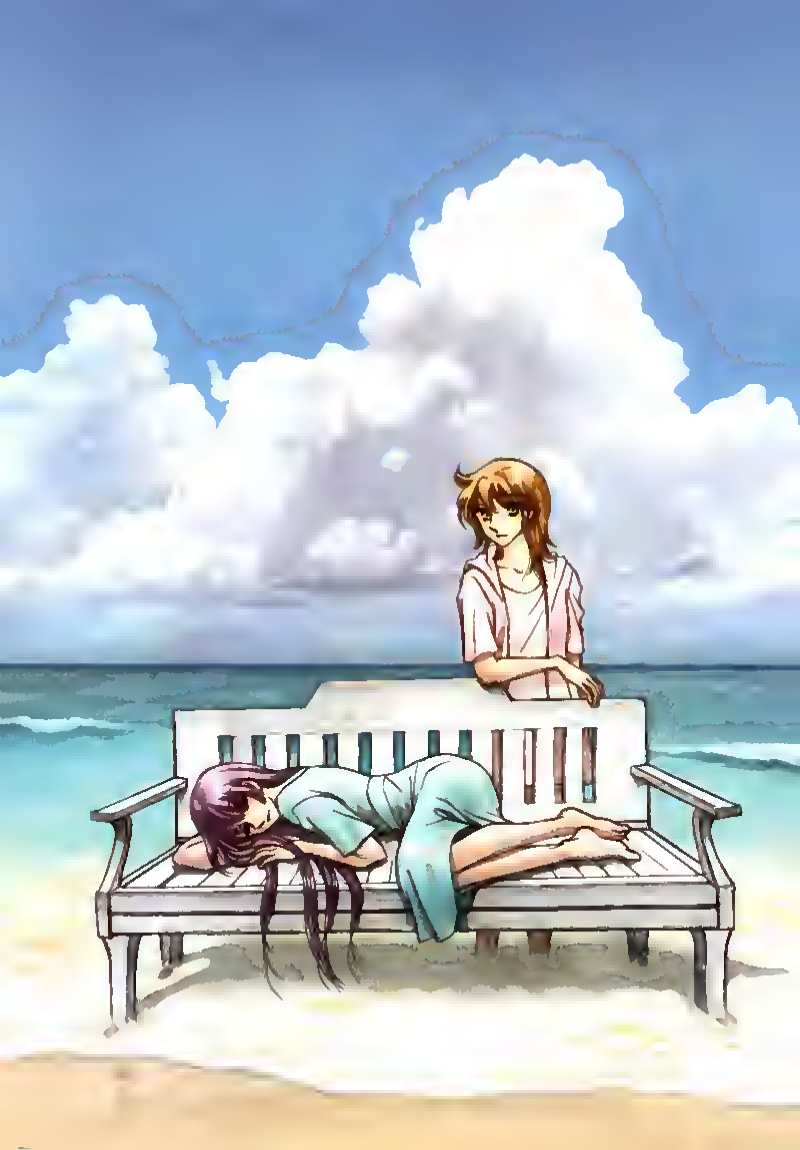
'너 몇 살이니?' How old are you ?

And it was an [illegible] question.

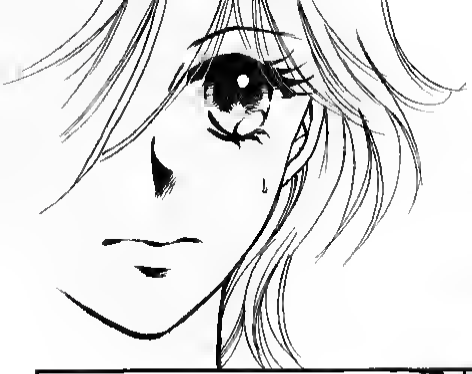
그건 정말로
많은 의미를 담은
질문이었다.

Part 8. Black Box 2



Time for meal.
Oh, wow.

I knew you were a good cook but you really make a lot of different dishes.
And they were so good. Did you learn them all ?
You know what, you are good enough to be a chef.
Well, I've been cooking for a long time, you see.
"A long time"? Was she really a professional chef ?
Or simply cooked for herself for a long time ?
What did she mean by that ?



What she just spoke ...

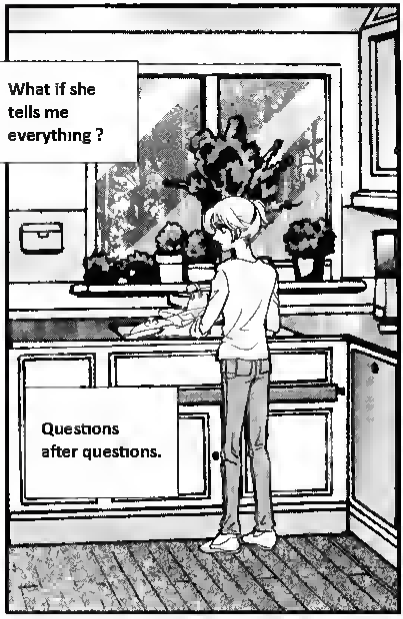
It wasn't what a mere 23 year-old would say.

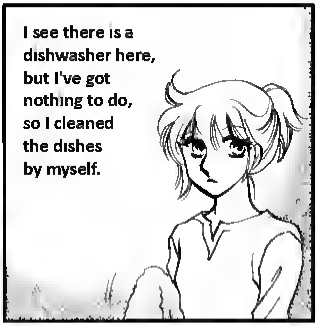
But... she doesn't explain.

I will not ask her anymore.
I feel like asking her directly would cross the line bewteen reality and fantasy.
Should you be drinking at this hour? You are weak against alcohol.

Who cares. Consider where we are.
I made these, so I expect you to clean up afterwards.

Sure, sure.

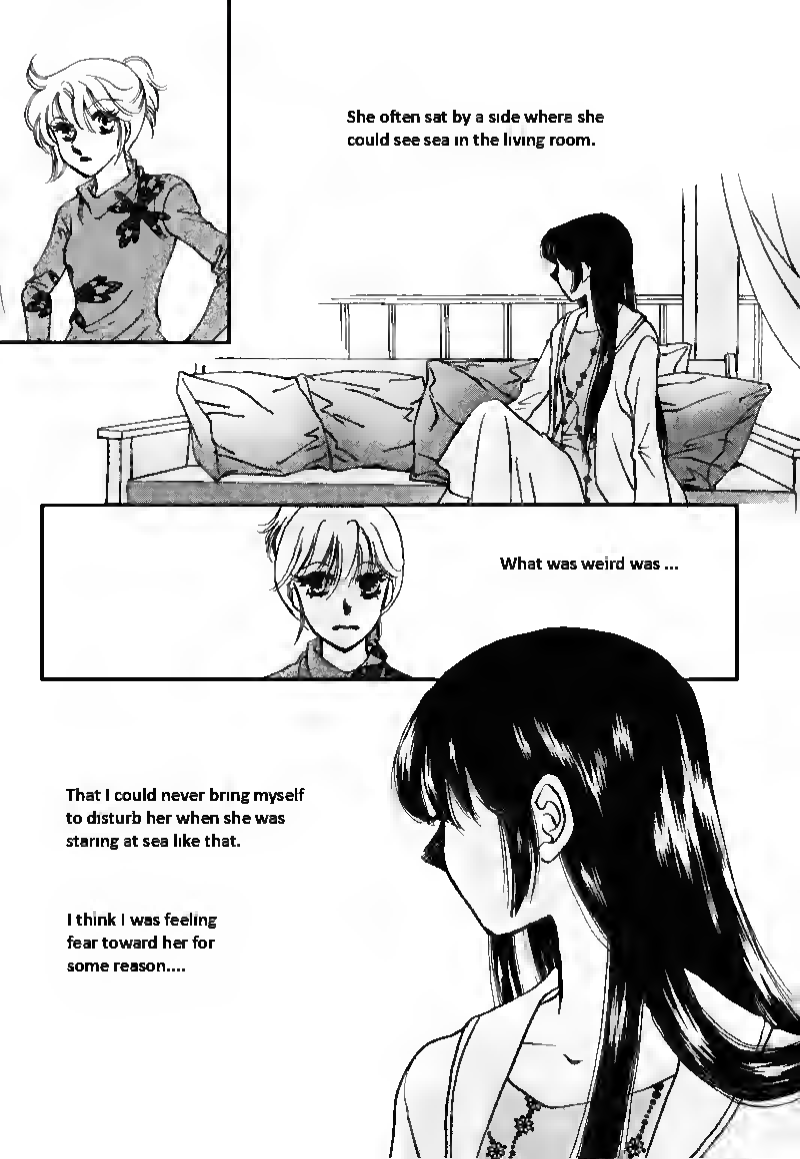

What if she tells me everything ?
Questions after questions.

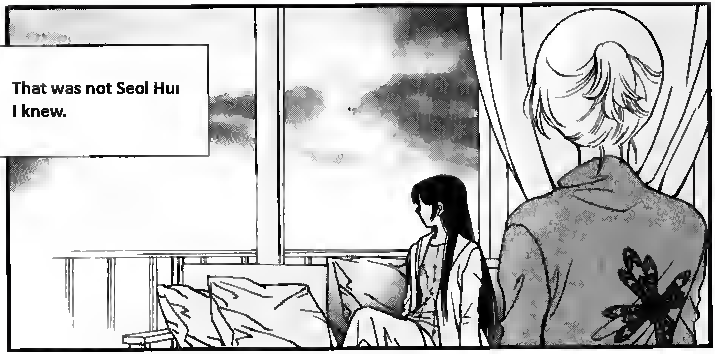

I see there is a dishwasher here, but I've got nothing to do, so I cleaned the dishes by myself.

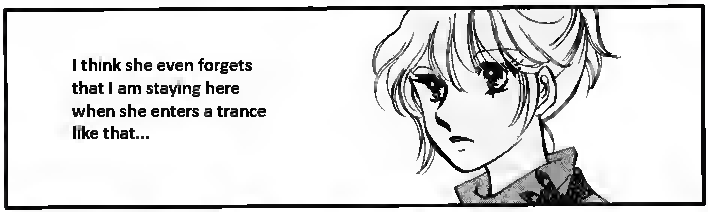
Good night.
Already ?

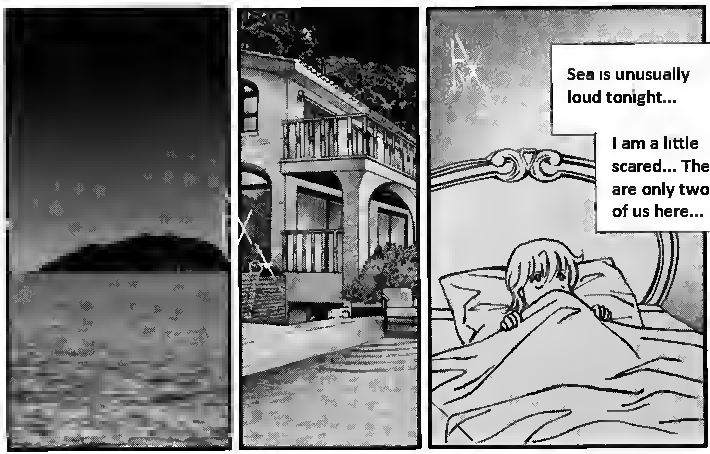
The days on the isle was prestigious, but it was too simple.
Sura's place
surasplace.com
Chores? What chores? We are here to take a break.
No plans or whatsoever. Do whatever you want and slack.
Want me to give you a ride on a mortor boat later ?
You can try out my dresses. Use whatever you see.

Basic rule is don't bother each other.
Unless it's meal time !
Come to think of it, she's been wearing the same clothes all along.
This is ... the closet ?
More than half of the clothes here are from top brands...
What's more: I don't think she paid good attention when buying them. More like ... she just picked stuff randomly....
Some of them still have tags on


She often sat by a side where she could see sea in the living room.
What was weird was ...
That I could never bring myself to disturb her when she was staring at sea like that.
I think I was feeling fear toward her for some reason....

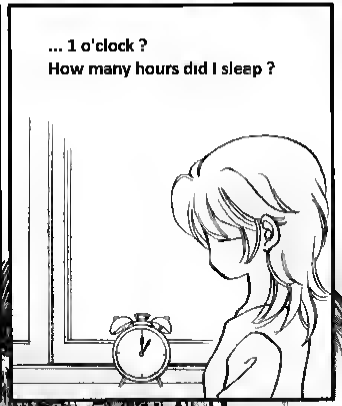

That was not Seol Hui I knew.

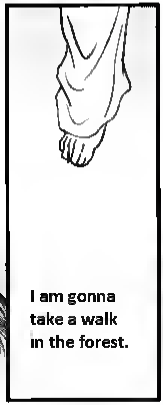

I think she even forgets that I am staying here when she enters a trance like that...


Sea is unusually loud tonight...
I am a little scared... There are only two of us here...

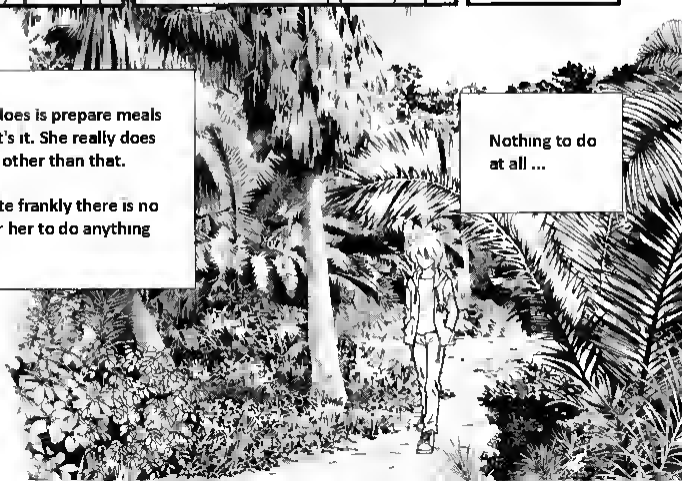
.... Don't
tell me ...
That she lived
here all alone ?
She did say there
was a manager.
But living here for many
years... ?
Pretty much alone ?
I cannot imagine ...

... 1 o'clock ?
How many hours did I sleep ?





I am gonna take a walk in the forest.



All she does is prepare meals and that's it. She really does nothing other than that.

And quite frankly there is no need for her to do anything else.

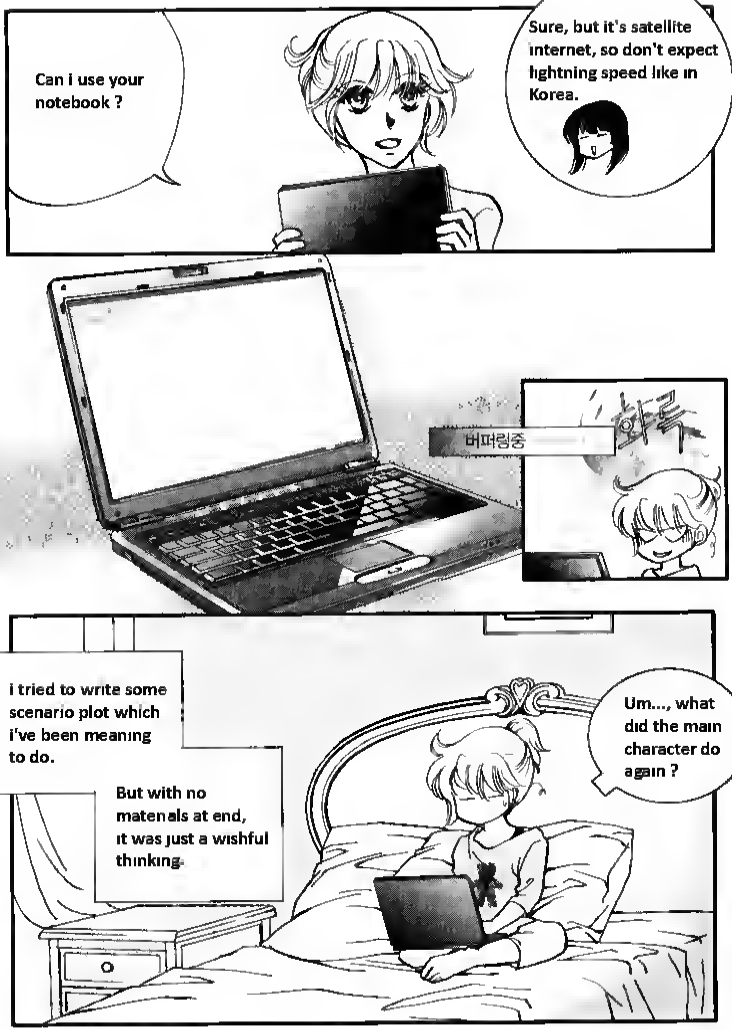
Nothing to do at all ...

Wake up late.
Eat.
Clean dishes.

Take a walk in the forest
or by the shore.
Read books.
Take naps.

I think this is what it is like
to have a vacation wanted by
so many

It's relaxing for sure.
But it's boring.


Can i use your notebook ?
Sure, but it's satellite internet, so don't expect lightning speed like in Korea.
버퍼링중
화르
i tried to write some scenario plot which i've been meaning to do.
But with no materials at end, it was just a wishful thinking.
Um..., what did the main character do again ?

There are actually gaming consoles here, but I don't feel like gaming.

And I don't wanna learn to control new consoles

Sha's right This place has evarything

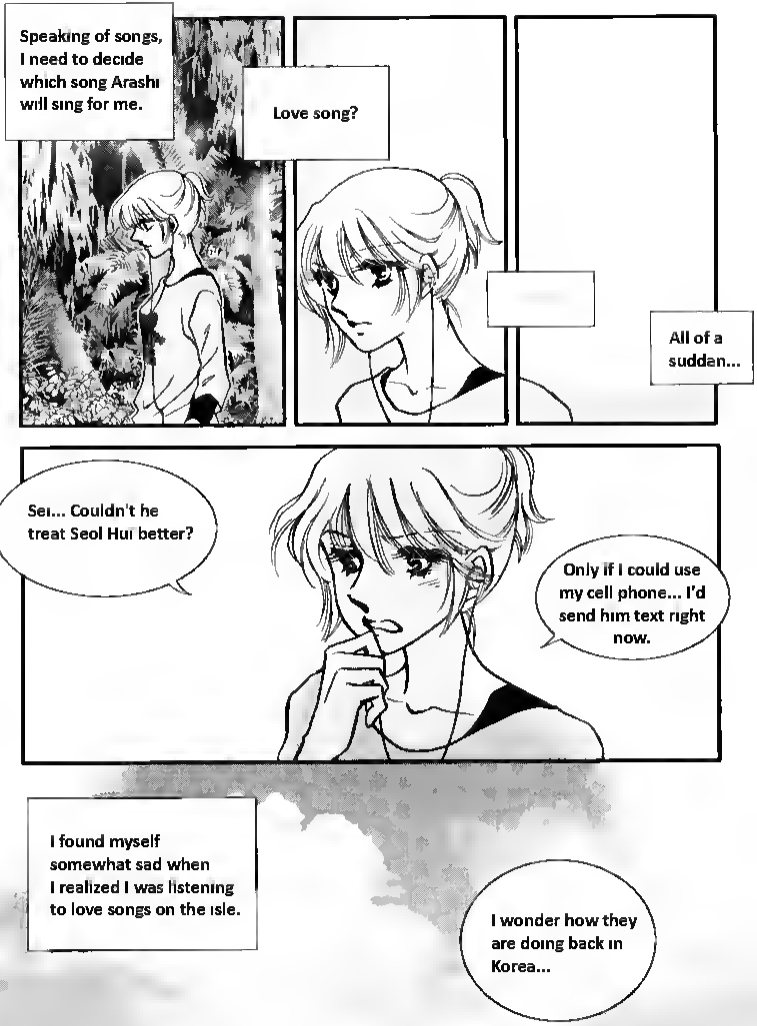
In the end, it turns out that Seol Hui had a MP3 player with some songs in it, so I decided to listen her songs.

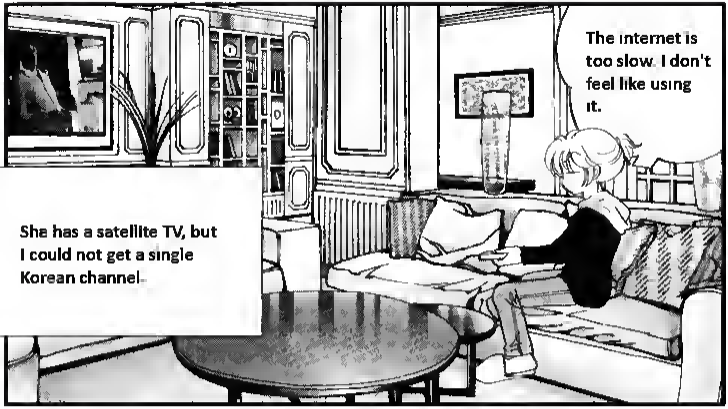
They are really old songs ...

But then I felt that listening to my good old favorite Korean songs in middle of nowhere would be kinad of ... unfit.

Actually, I liked some of songs Seol Hui had in her MP3 player.

Taking a walk.


Speaking of songs, I need to decide which song Arashi will sing for me.
Love song?
All of a sudden...
Sei... Couldn't he treat Seol Hui better?
Only if I could use my cell phone... I'd send him text right now.
I found myself somewhat sad when I realized I was listening to love songs on the isle.
I wonder how they are doing back in Korea...



As long as I don't actively remind myself how boring it is,

There is no stress to be had here. At the same time, there is nothing going on here, no excitement.

In other words, I was no longer troubled by general issues that troubled me back in Korea.

Sura's place

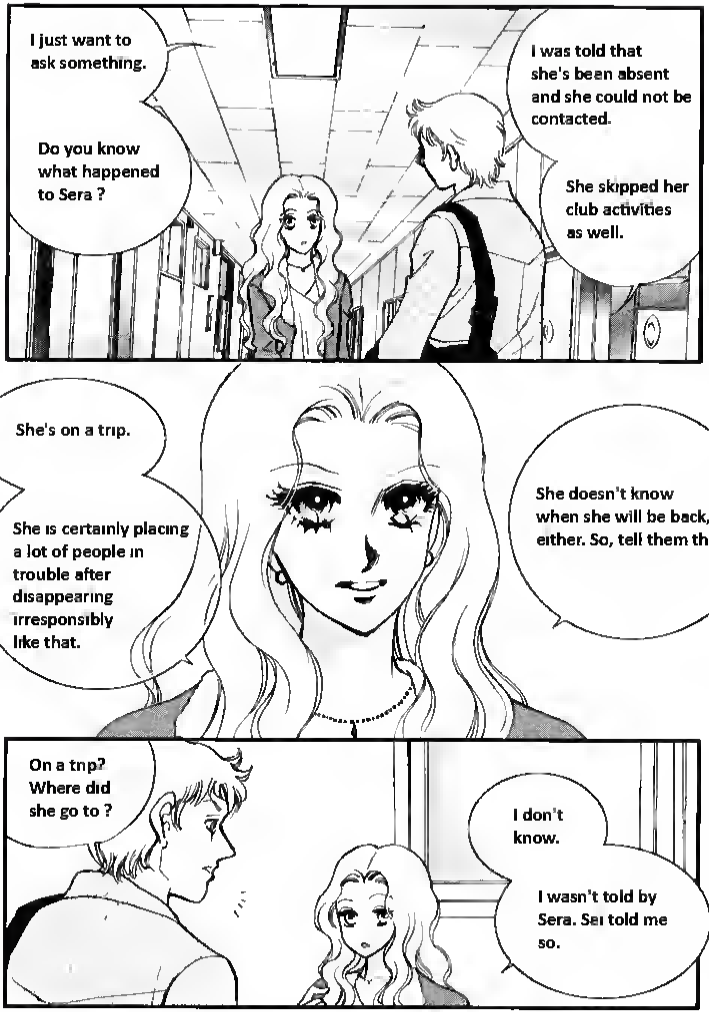
surasplace.com

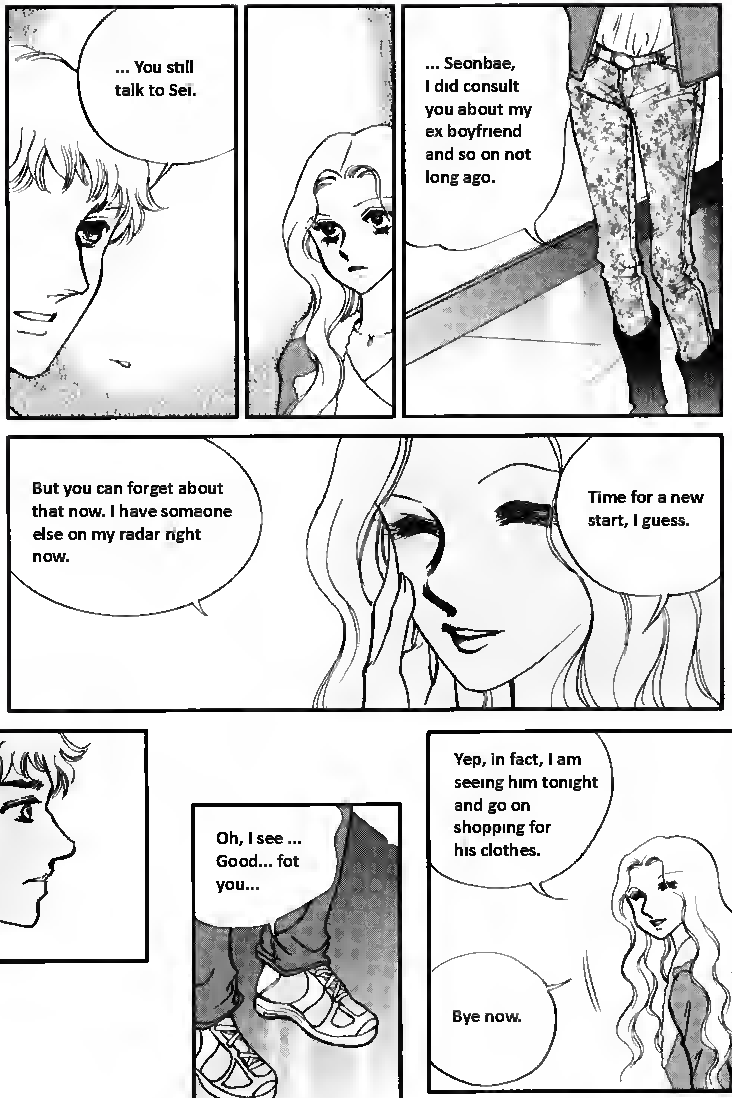
I guess it's only possible because this is a vacation isle.

And Seol Hui who is kind of surreal here right with me.

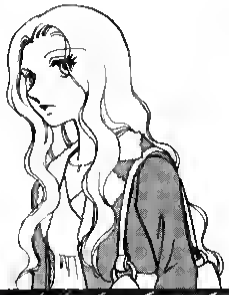
... Did she really live here for many years?
All alone ?

Ah-Young
Did you check your phone last night ?
Hello, yes, seonbae
I had a chance to check very late at night.
Why did you want to see me ? I have to go.


I just want to ask something.
Do you know what happened to Sera ?
I was told that she's been absent and she could not be contacted.
She skipped her club activities as well.
She's on a trip.
She is certainly placing a lot of people in trouble after disappearing irresponsibly like that.
She doesn't know when she will be back, either. So, tell them that.
On a trip? Where did she go to ?
I don't know.
I wasn't told by Sera. She told me so.

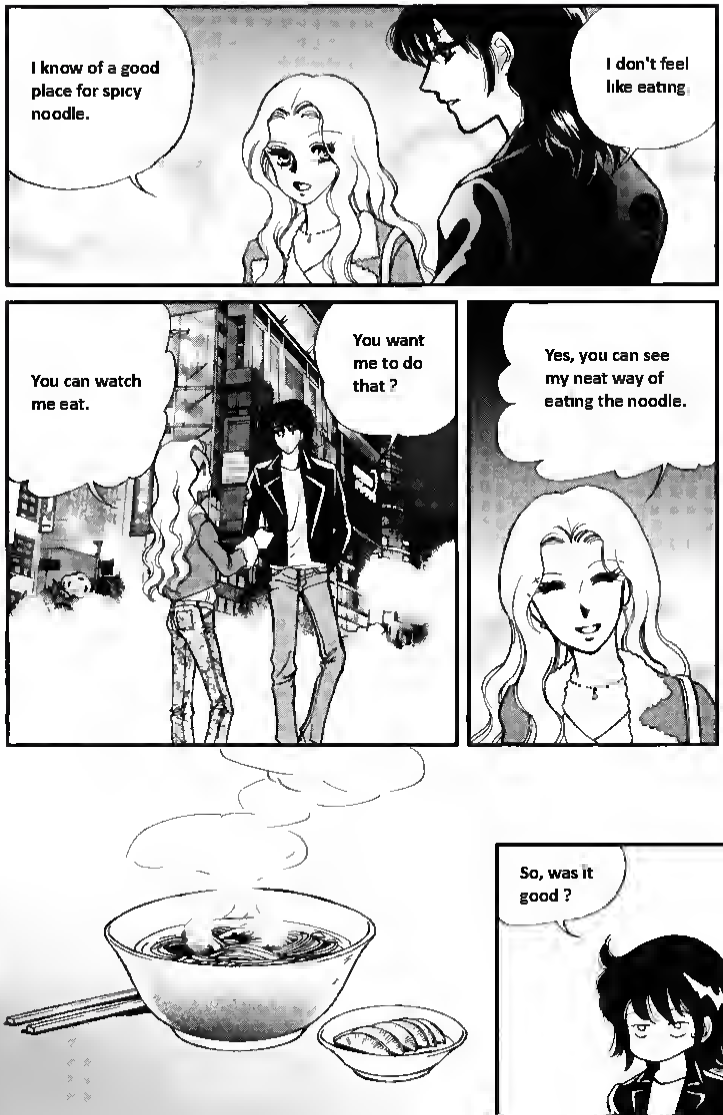

... You still talk to Sei.
... Seonbae, I did consult you about my ex boyfriend and so on not long ago.
But you can forget about that now. I have someone else on my radar right now.
Time for a new start, I guess.
Oh, I see ... Good... fot you...
Yep, in fact, I am seeing him tonight and go on shopping for his clothes.
Bye now.

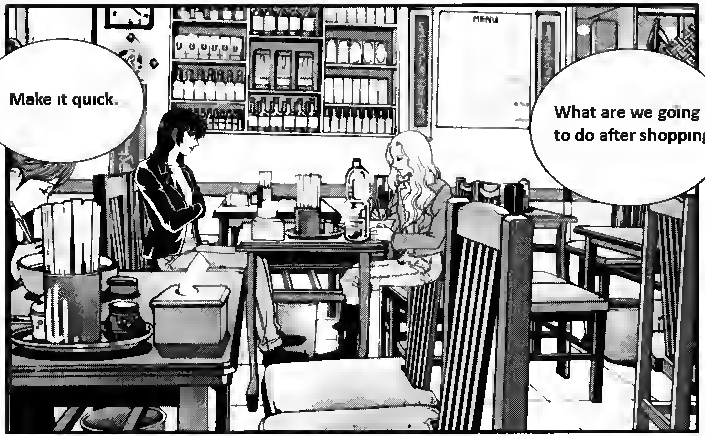
... Loser.

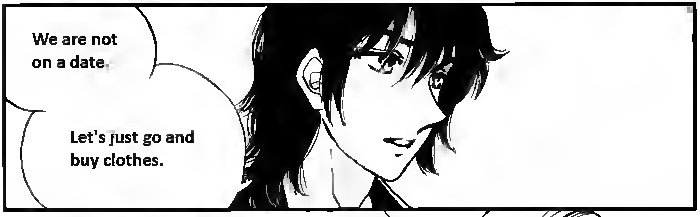


Trying to get a chance to confront me by using all kind of excuses he could find ...

When are you going to get the clue that I am not interested in you anymore?

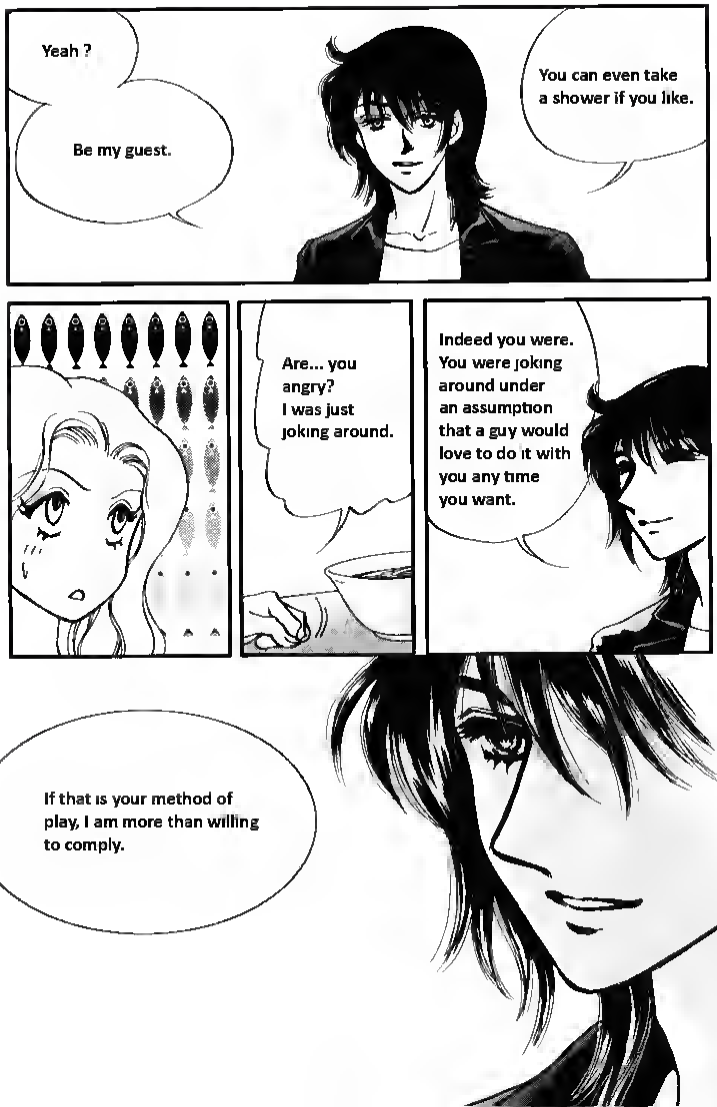

I know of a good place for spicy noodle.
I don't feel like eating.
You can watch me eat.
You want me to do that ?
Yes, you can see my neat way of eating the noodle.
So, was it good ?


Make it quick.
What are we going to do after shopping?


We are not on a date.
Let's just go and buy clothes.

Can I visit the hotel room you are staying?

Ah, you just made a serious face.
You thought about something sexy, didn't you, old geezer.
I just want to see your hotel room. That's all

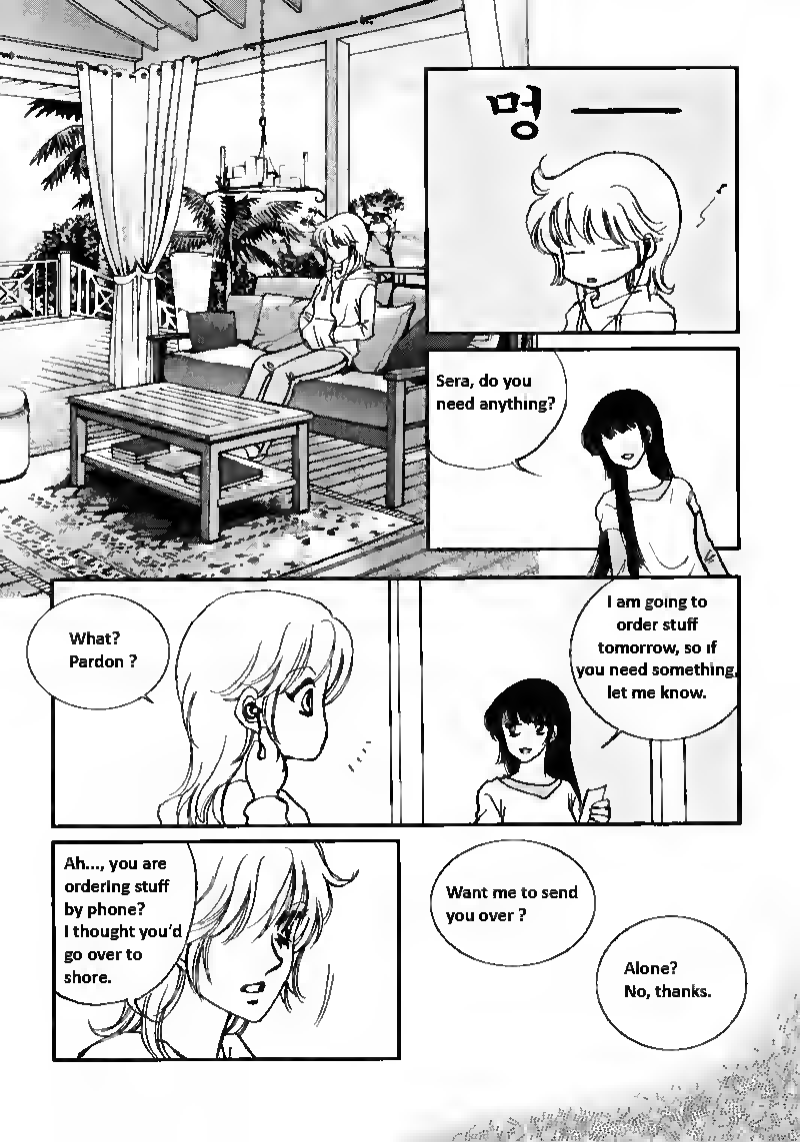

Yeah ?
Be my guest.
You can even take a shower if you like.
Are... you angry? I was just joking around.
Indeed you were. You were joking around under an assumption that a guy would love to do it with you any time you want.
If that is your method of play, I am more than willing to comply.

N, no -,
I was not -
I was just joking !
Let's go shopping.
Yes, I just need a jacket and a pair of pants.
Sura's place
surasplace.com
Thank you.
I just wanted to see him freak out ...
Did it backfire ...
Kkya -

Watch out.
It was an accident. I ddin't mean to do this.
So ?
Nice perfume by the way.

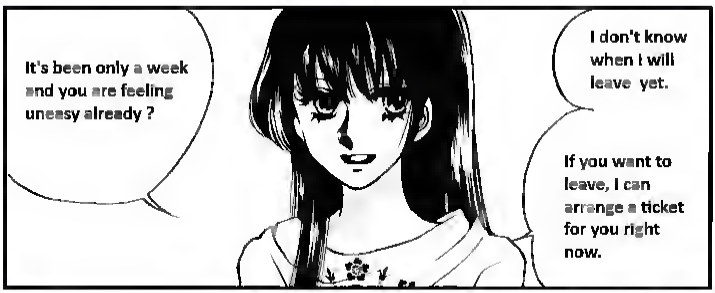
A guy like him is
is Sera's boyfriend ?

No way.


멍 ——
Sera, do you need anything?
What? Pardon ?
I am going to order stuff tomorrow, so if you need something, let me know.
Ah..., you are ordering stuff by phone? I thought you'd go over to shore.
Want me to send you over ?
Alone? No, thanks.

Does this mean she is going to stay here longer ?
We've been here about a week now.
There was this one time I was browsing the web and found a movie which was about soldiers who opted to be left on an isle in Mediterranean Sea after a war was over.
The isle looked as if an escape from the busy life of the modern society.
But looking from inside, it was no different than any human society.
But this isle is really in middle of nowhere.
There is no society.
Resting and boredom stand equal.

I wonder how long one can spend resting here without a purpose to look forward to.
Seol Hui, when are we going back ?
It's been almost a week and I am getting a little uneasy now.
You know, school, work and all. I don't think I should stay longer.

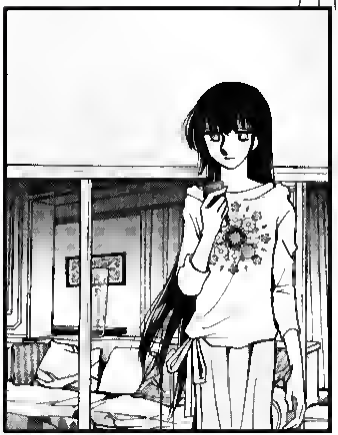

It's been only a week and you are feeling uneasy already ?
I don't know when I will leave yet.
If you want to leave, I can arrange a ticket for you right now.

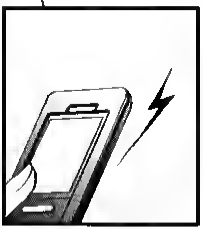
I was like "Whatever!" when I decided to tag along, but now I am feeling progressively uneasy.

Does this mean I am too used to the busy life style of the modern society ?

I have to keep "I gotta enjoy this moment" mindset afloat.

But I cannot help but feel uneasy about... school ... and other things. I mean I told Sei and I am sure he told my mom about my absence but still ...





When are you coming back?
- Sei

Sera's mom contacted me. She is going to stay at my place for now.
- Sei

Ask Sera to contact me !!!
- Sei

Asnwer me at least !
- Sei

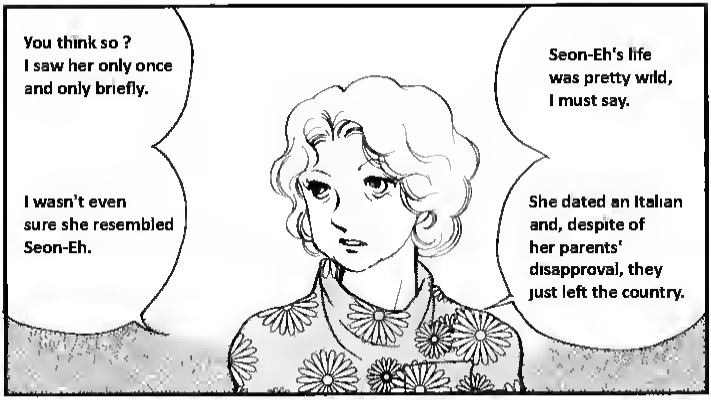
Marcus, did you call me ?

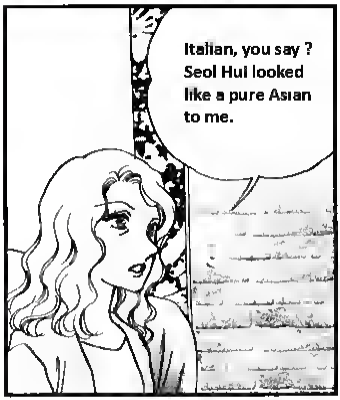
I am sorry. I turned the phone off for a while.

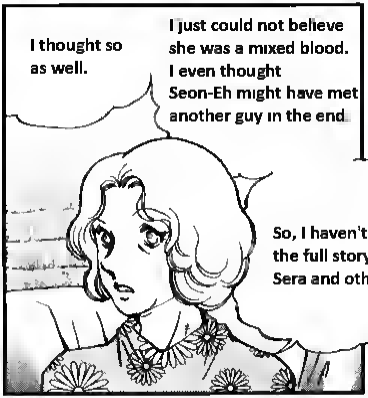
I was taking a real vacation.

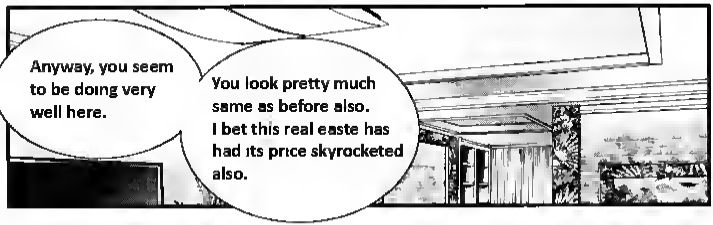
Vera Chen ?
I see
Okay.
I understand.
I will confront her.
I will go back to Korea after a couple of days.

Tell her to go to Korea.
So, without telling you anything at all, she just went on a trip with Seol Hui ?
It appears that way
I heard that Seol Hui was a daughter of your high school classmate ?
She had a strange personality.
Maybe because she was adopted?
Sura's place
suraspace.com


You think so ?
I saw her only once and only briefly.
I wasn't even sure she resembled Seon-Eh.
Seon-Eh's life was pretty wild, I must say.
She dated an Italian and, despite of her parents' disapproval, they just left the country.

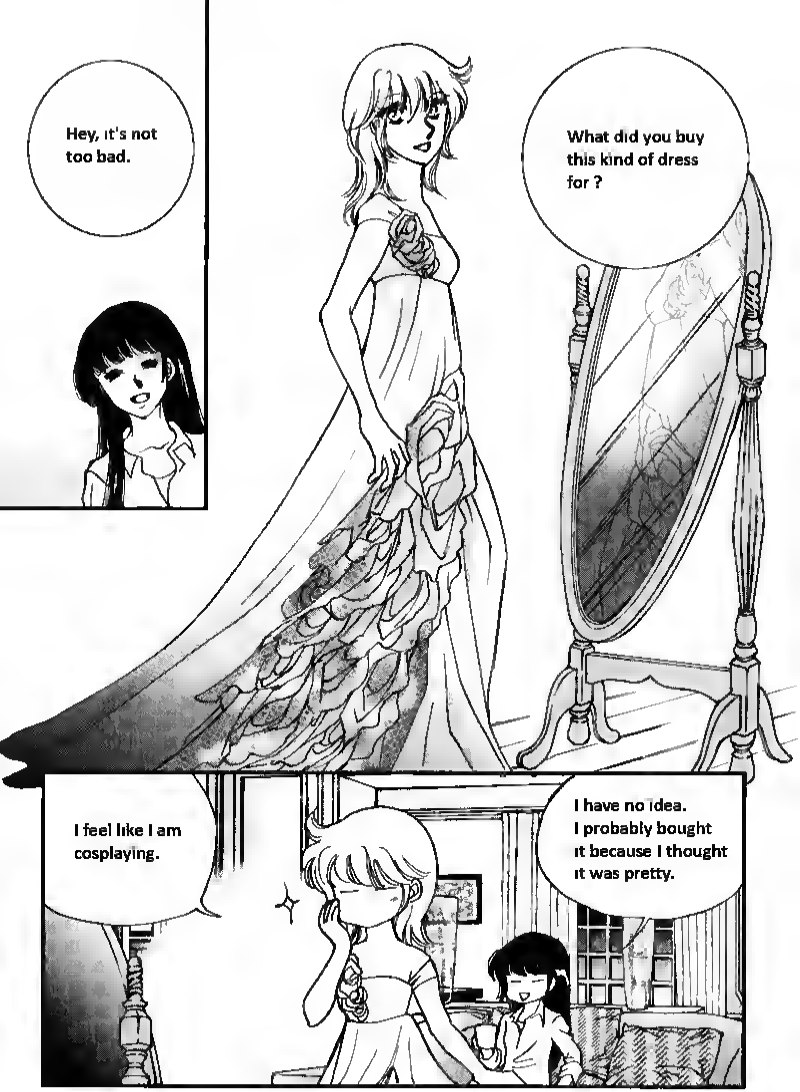

Italian, you say ? Seol Hui looked like a pure Asian to me.


I thought so as well.
I just could not believe she was a mixed blood. I even thought Seon-Eh might have met another guy in the end.
So, I haven't told the full story to Sera and others.

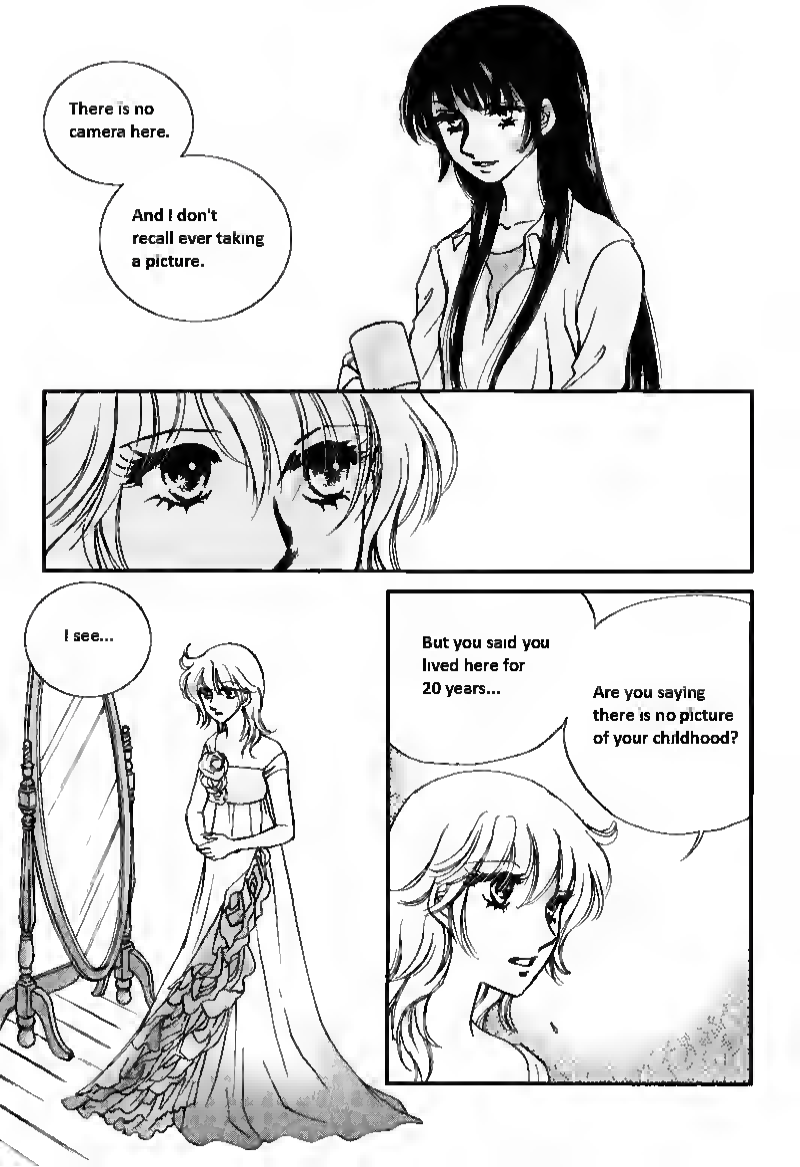

Anyway, you seem to be doing very well here.
You look pretty much same as before also. I bet this real easte has had its price skyrocketed also.

You know, I bought this place a long time ago.
Besides, what's the point of increased value? I don't intent to sell it
Still, that has to add to positives.
You don't have an aging husband who is becoming more and more of burden, and I heard Sei is going to debut soon ?
What are you saying ?
You've managed to raise your kids well and you still have your marriage.
You are the one who did the good job.
Haha ...
Anyway, welcome.
You should have visited me before.
I mean Sera's place can't be comfortable for you, can it ?
Huh ?
What are you saying? Have you been to where she lives?
It's huge and it's a house

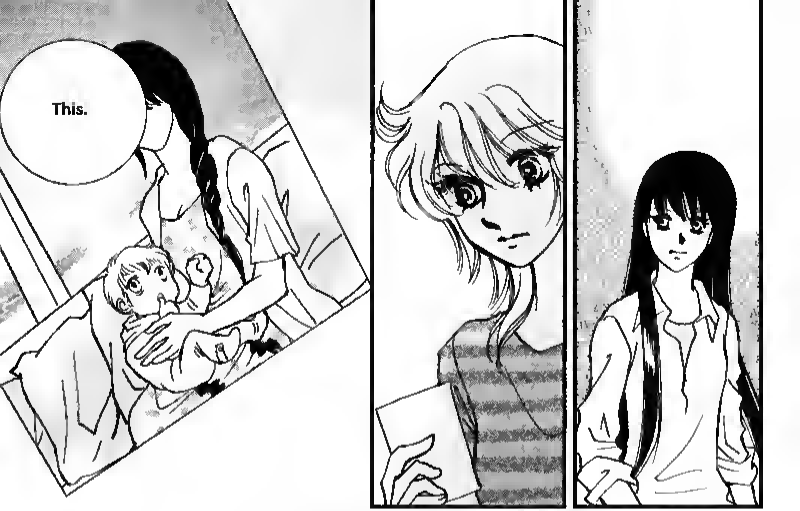
A house ?
Sei never told me about that.
How can she and her roomate afford such a house ?
Hmm?
What are you doing ?
I am so bored that I am trying to put on your dresses.
You've got some top class dresses here.
Sounds fun. Try one on and let me see.


Hey, it's not too bad.
What did you buy this kind of dress for ?
I feel like I am cosplaying.
I have no idea. I probably bought it because I thought it was pretty.

I was buying pretty much everything I saw, so I don't remember why I bought which.
I bet I can write a book out of your story.
Try others on.
Do you have a camera here?
I want to take some pictures of me in these nice dresses
You know, we've not taken any pictures while we were traveling.
My cell phone has been completely out of battery for a while, so I couldn't use it.
We should take some pictures as souvenir.


There is no camera here.
And I don't recall ever taking a picture.
I see...
But you said you lived here for 20 years...
Are you saying there is no picture of your childhood?

No.
.... I will try another on.
I have few pictures that are not mine though.
Really ? Show me !
Keep doing what you do. I will bring it over.


This.

This is ... her mother ?
This is your mother, right ?
Is this baby you then ?

But you said you have no pictures of your childhood. What's this picture then ?

No, wait ...
Is this even her mother ?
Wait ...
This is getting confusing.

Aren't you really going to tell me nothing ?!
Tell me something ! I am prepared to listen !

You keep throwing me cues !
You want to tell me something!
So, just tell me ! I will understand !
Anything..., you say.
What's on your mind? Vampire ?
I certainly don't enjoy drinking blood.
Yuta's place
yunasplace.com

Vampire's longevity ?
I've certainly lived longer than you. But I don't have any pictures to prove it.
Of course, the woman you see on the picture is not my mother.
But thanks to your mother's friend in that picture, I was able to meet you.
You are willing to listen anything ?

Well, I don't think you mean that.
You can't even stay here for a week.
True ...
I couldn't even manage a week here but she ...
I thought it'd be painful to live tens of years on this isle alone.
it's simply beyond my imagination.
But... I want to know more about you. I want to understand you.

If you want to know more about me,
Take on your jacket and come outside.
?
Get on the boat.
?

At this hour ? And that boat doesn't even have lights. It's dangerous.
I have a bigger one here but the bigger one is not here. It's out for maintenance. Besides, this one's good enough for the purpose.
I thought you wanted to understand me.
I understand.

It's just ... dark.
It's dark everywhere.
It's ... kind of scary ...
Why did you turn it off ?
What are you doing ?
I am going to swim a bit.

What ?!
Are you crazy ?!
Even if this is a tropical region, we are still in November and in this darkness...
허허
Seol Hui !
Seol Hui !
Seol Hui !

Dark sea...

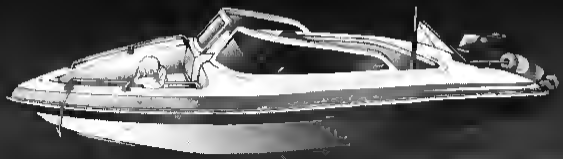
I could sense nothing but darkness ...

Where did the beautiful and peaceful sea during daylight go ?

Come back !
Please !
What are you doing this for!
Seol Hui !
What's your point ?

After my eyes got used to darkness, I was able to see the boat's shape.
Everything else was still pretty much veiled in pitch black.
Depth of sea
And depth of night sky -
I felt overwhelming pressure from up and down.

I thought that perhaps this
is what it was like to be in
early days of Earth.



ra's place
rasplace.com

Perpetual solitude

Seol Hui -- !!!
How much time has passed?
It's all too quiet...
Did she drown... ?
첨벙
첨벙
촤

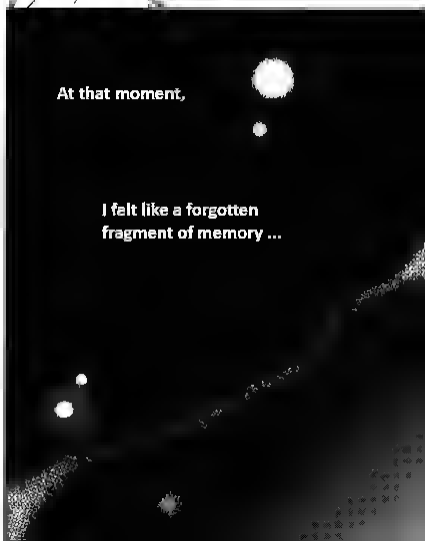
That was a workout. And I am freezing.
Of course !!! What did you do that for in the first place ?!
.... ? She's climbing up here as if she's feather weight...
Put on my coat. It's freezing.
I am fine.
Why did you do that ?

I don't know . .
Perhaps, I do want
you to understand
me...
Ho was your
solitary time ?
Do you by any
chance recall
a nymph of a lamp
story?

What ?
A nymph of a lamp ? Why are you talking about that suddenly?
The lamp from Aladdin?
The genie ?
... Yes.
Anyway, we will leave to go back to Seoul the day after tomorrow.

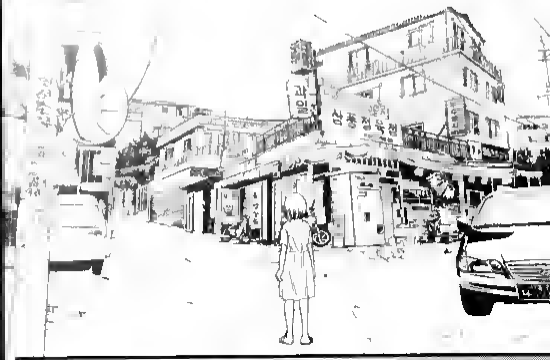
So, we are finally going back ...
Why did she talk about the lamp all of a sudden ?

What's your name ?


At that moment,
I felt like a forgotten fragment of memory ...

Something I may want to take it out ...

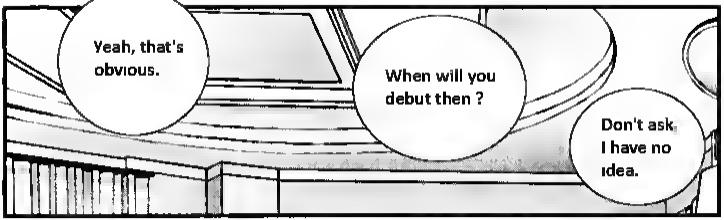
But something I may not want at the same time ...



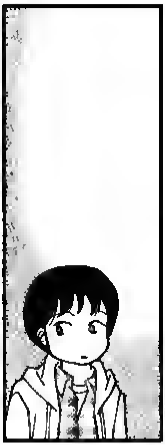
Was about to surface ...

As if I found a blackbox from bottom of sea ...

You really use this whole place alone ?
I, too, was shocked.
Hey, what a nice kitchen. Can I live here, too ?
No, sorry. I was told to use this place for myself only
Anyway, you now know that, even though I was excluded from the debut group, I was not abandoned.


Yeah, that's obvious.
When will you debut then ?
Don't ask. I have no idea.

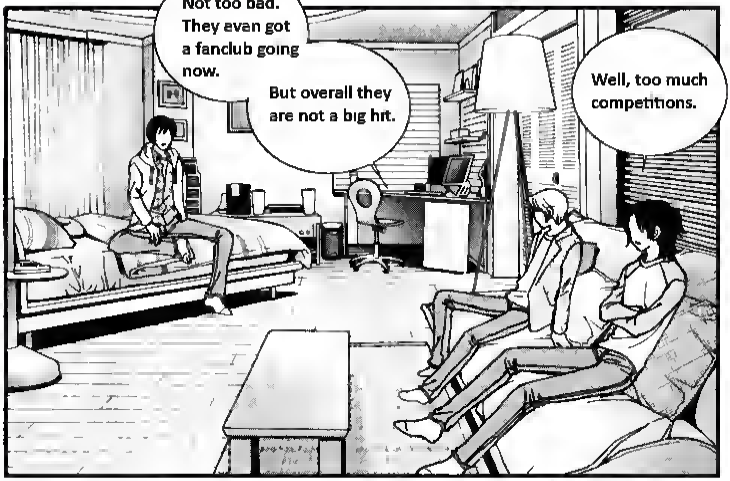
I guess as long as I follow their schedule I will debut one day.



By the way, I heard that an offer for an ad was made for you. You never heard of that ?
What ? What ad ?

They would have let me do that if it was for real.
Where did you hear that from ?
My bro.

You know my bro works for an ad company
He was looking over some documents and saw your name and told me.
It must be for real then.
If you wasn't told, that means your agency or someone higher up rejected
Yeah, I guess.
Too bad.
Sura Place
surasplace.com
So..., yeah ! I have potential !
이자식 왕자병을 죽여, 살려?
How is OneKiss doing ?


Not too bad. They evan got a fanclub going now.
But overall they are not a big hit.
Well, too much competitions.

They will find their real value once their first album is released.

Hey, it's been a long time we gathered together. Let's hit a night club.
Yeah, I haven't been to a night club for half a year.
Yeah ! Let's go !
He so wants to go.

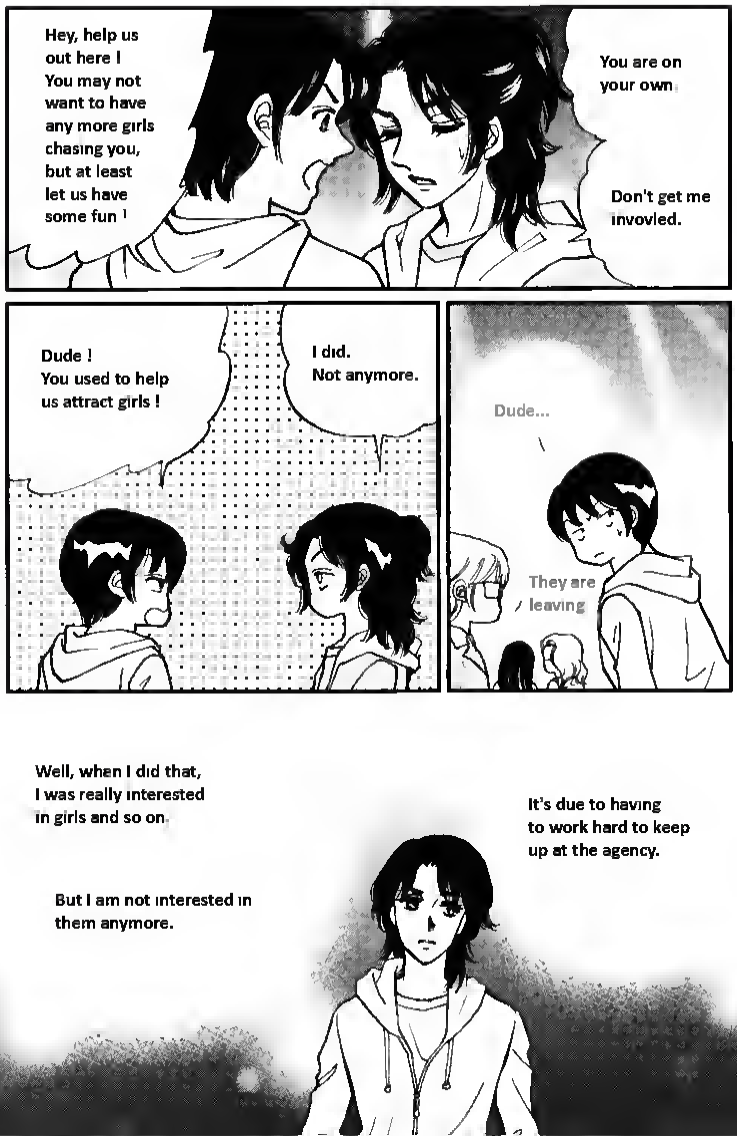
They have never replied me back ...

Seriously...

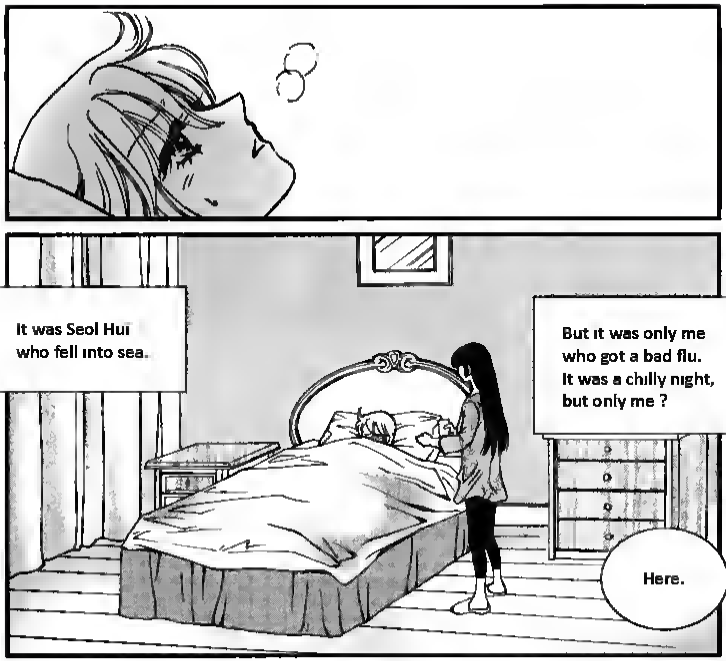
I left so many text messages...

Even Sera didn't respond at all ...

Where did they go to ?
Are you waiting for a call ? From your girlfriend ?
No.
Did you come here alone ?
No, I came here with two friends.
Ahah, I see. There are only two of us.
My friend is in washroom right now.
Sei -
Suppose you are the friends?
Ah, yes, hello.
Are you here alone?
My friend is in washroom. She should be back here soon.


Hey, help us out here ! You may not want to have any more girls chasing you, but at least let us have some fun !
You are on your own.
Don't get me invovled.
Dude ! You used to help us attract girls !
I did. Not anymore.
Dude...
They are leaving
Well, when I did that, I was really interested in girls and so on.
It's due to having to work hard to keep up at the agency.
But I am not interested in them anymore.

And I hate to admit
but she has something
to do with this also, I feel.
"I love you..."
Maybe because I had
those dreams...
And since I haven't seen
her in a while ...
I kind of ..., ugh, miss her?
Headache.
Just come
back already !

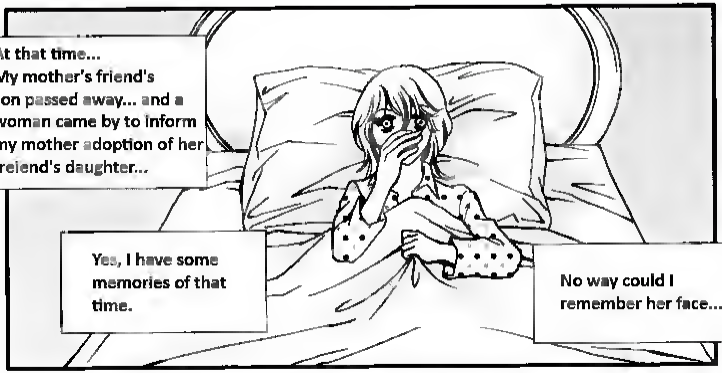

It was Seol Hui who fell into sea.
But it was only me who got a bad flu. It was a chilly night, but only me ?
Here.
Do you want me to postpone the departure date ?
It's actually not too bad. Just a good sleep will cure me, I think.
We can leave tomorrow.
How are you so fine ?
I see. Rest up.

I think I had a similar experience before...
When I had flu like this...
The dream...
What's your wish?
What's your name ?
What's your wish now ?

Why do you keep asking me for wishes?
Since you keep on asking, I feel like you are like a nymph of a lamp that grants wishes.

Haha, like the genie ?

Do you by any chance recall a nymph of a lamp story?


At that time...
My mother's friend's son passed away... and a woman came by to inform my mother adoption of her friend's daughter...
Yes, I have some memories of that time.
No way could I remember her face...

Was it just a coincidence that I saw Seol Hui from that dream ?

Why was I lost in the first place ?

My son is dead because of you - !!!

What was that just now ?

When and why did I even hear that?

Yes...

The woman who visited at that time...

Yes, I am older than you

I want to remember. But at the same time, I don't.

Sura's place
surasplace.com

Maybe, it wasn't a dream at all ?

Hmm ...
Didn't you...

I did not intent to visit you.
I went there to deliver few keepsakes from Yu Seon-Eh.
You mean ...
You were the one who found me lost back then ?
Oh, you remember.
But you haven't changed.

Good job recalling that.
That was like 10 years ago ?
That means she is like ... in 30s or 40 ?
H- hang on.
She doesn't get old for real ?
Really... how old are you?
Am I supposed to believe what is happening ?
If I do tell you,
I will also have to tell you to forget what you heard.

But you won't be able to forget, I am sure.
"Forget it...."
I will tell you one day. Let's just leave this at here for now.
Let's take it slow.
It doesn't matter how old I actually am. The matter is that I am still your friend, Seol Hui.

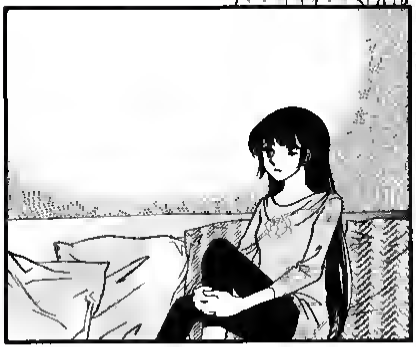
When she mentioned friendship...
I decided to let it go for now.
OKay...
I am... going to bed.
Rest well. I will check your fever tomorrow morning.
Yeah,
Let's take this slow.

Like she suggested, I've decided to take it slow.

Because...

I didn't think I was capable of handling the real truth out there.

And it wasn't like there was anything I could do.



How old am I anyway ?
It's been too long since I cared counting my age.

Hmmm....., I guess
I am over 400 for sure.

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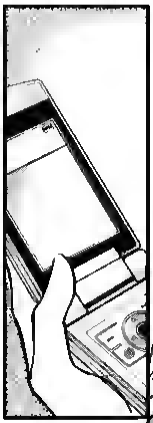


Dude..., I don't care where they went. But having no contacts at all bothers me.
I understand that Yuki-hime is with her. Still, this is ridiculous.

ARASHI—
Rika, long time no chat.
Yeah.
Ryuichi sent me a text. He wants the contract terminated.
Well, if you can change his mind, I will owe you one.
If not then, it's fine.
Hmm ?
No, not yet.
Well, I can still go for single, you know.
Just try.
I won't care even if you fail.
Soup

Huh?
For real ?
Here?
Might be fun.
Sure, you are welcome to come here.
Sure, come here and look. Let me text you the address.
Do I want to die or do I just want fun ?
What am I doing ?

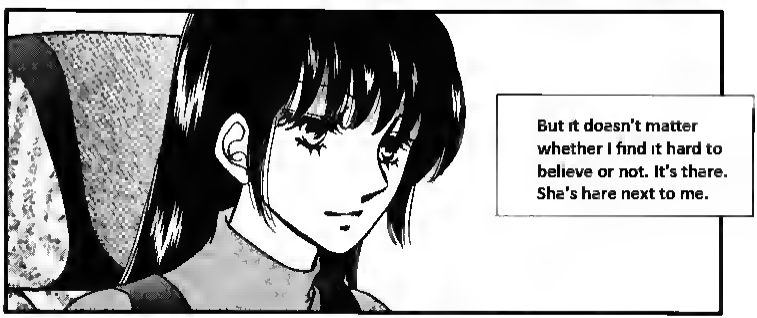
Damn, my depression is about to chew me alive again.
Why did I even make the call ?
Do I really want to revive my career ?
What's the point ?
How long has it been since I stopped doing drugs?
While I was tangled with her, I felt like there was a way...
Just make a good song and end my life for good?

Perhaps it's good that I still have some degree of desire to write songs.
I did feel I was making a positive progress when I came to Korea...
But now that I've been alone for some time, depression is coming back...
딩동
Arashi ~, wanna hit the downtown ?
툭

It is said that love can save the world.
Yes, I don't know, either.
I don't know, either, Sera chan ...

멍 -

I am feeling a lot better now ...
Still what happened last night is still ... hard to believe.


But it doesn't matter whether I find it hard to believe or not. It's there. She's here next to me.

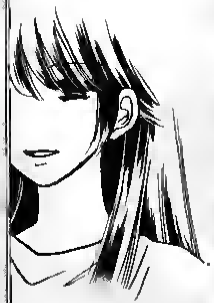
Blood ...
Needle, injection -
And death

A rich second generation billionaire by inheritance... who claimed to have spent most of her life on a tiny isle...

Yet the same woman I met when I was a kid.

Stuff I cannot deny...

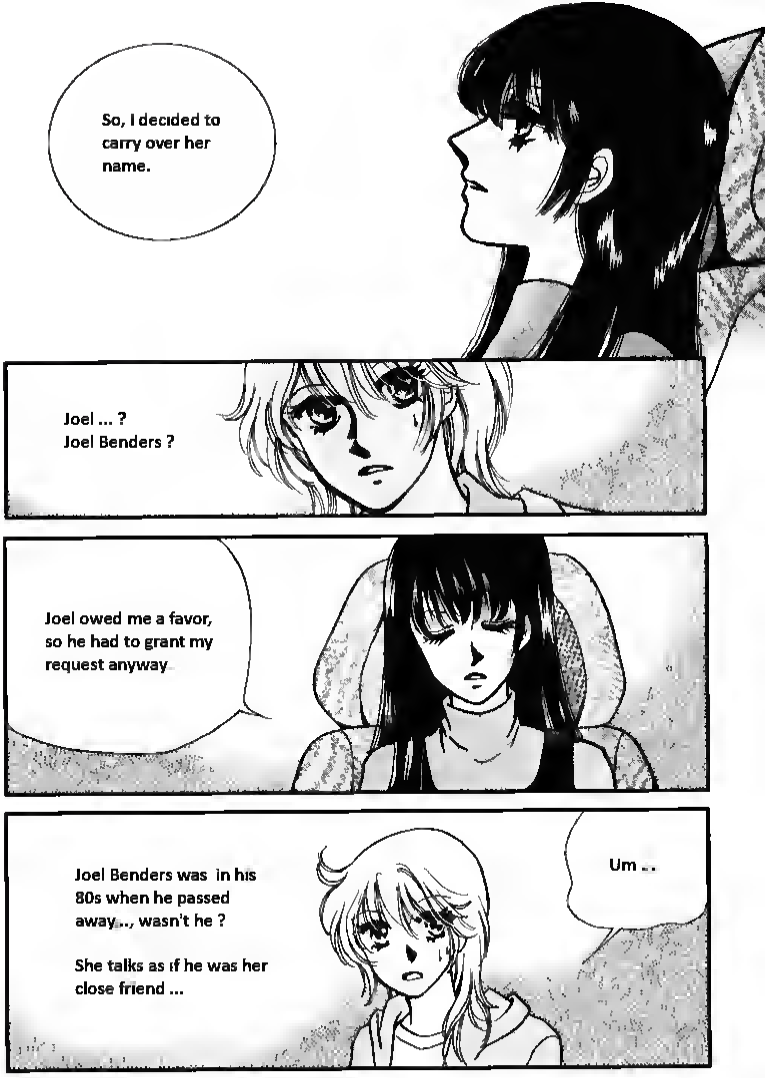
I am your friend, Seol Hui

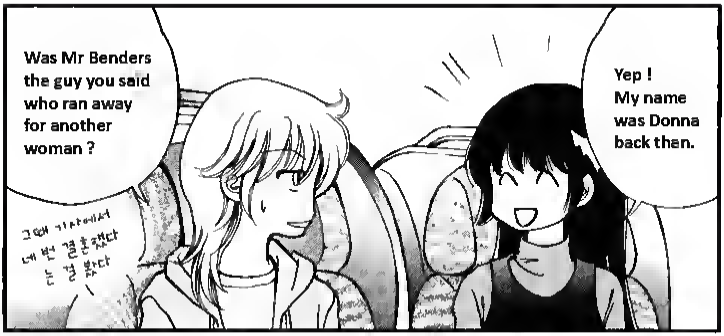


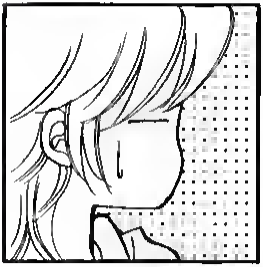
And with that statement, I have no choice but to keep this up as if nothing happened.

I don't feel that she ever gave me any choices

... What happened to the baby in the picture then ?
Died.
Yu Seon-Eh died from an accident, but the baby survived.
I took the baby in and asked Joel to adopt her.
I named her Alisa.
But the baby didn't survive in the end.


So, I decided to carry over her name.
Joel ... ?
Joel Benders ?
Joel owed me a favor, so he had to grant my request anyway
Joel Benders was in his 80s when he passed away..., wasn't he ?
She talks as if he was her close friend ...
Um ..





So....
Joel Benders was not her step father but ... a lover ?

Seol Hui's age is counting higher...

That means she was a close friend of the old woman who died?

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She's giving me too much headache by telling me those...
지끈
So, the inhentance... was more like an alimony ?
He probably figured I'd live few more hundred years at least.
But I wouldn't be surprised I suddenly drop dead any day.

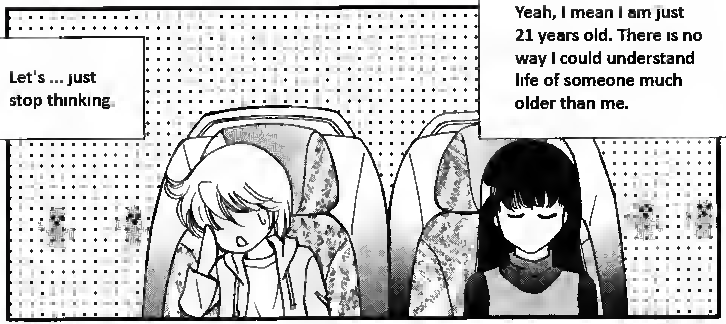
Which means she's a human ?
Feels comforted.
Actually, I didn't spend whole time on the isle. I visited you, remember?
Oh? Oh, yeah.
It's just that my permanent residence was the isle.
I did go elsewhere and stayed elsewhere in various places.
In the end though, I eventually returned to the isle.
Whereever I wanted go, I was free to go to.
It was just that my final destination was that isle.

That was what Joel wanted.
He wanted me within his reach always...
Until he died...
He wanted me to be there for eternity...
At that point, I recalled a song named "Donna" that she had.
And I thought maybe they were really in love.

응?
Huh?

H, hey, wait -
Hang on -
How about
Sei ?
Lover in their
former life ?
Father thingy?

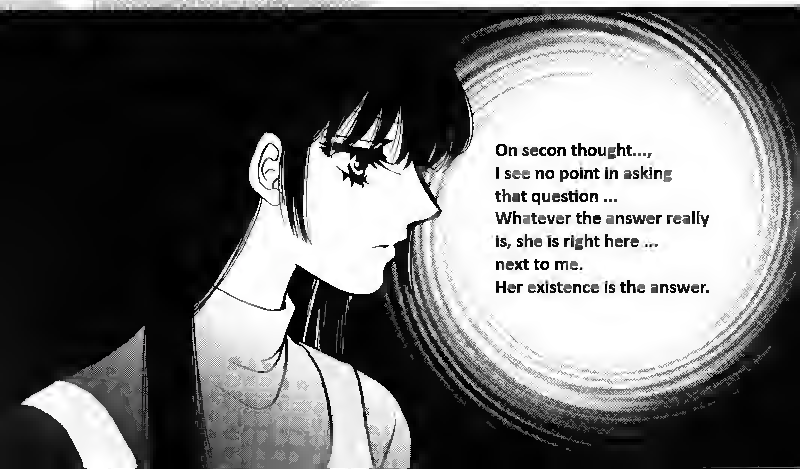
응
Memory
exceeded
과
부

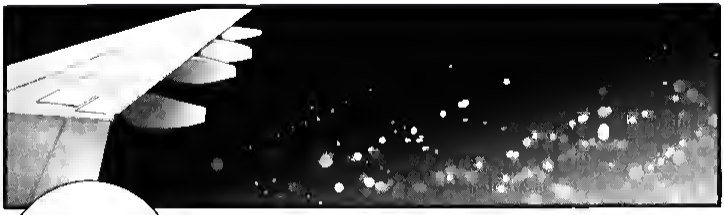

Let's ... just stop thinking.
Yeah, I mean I am just 21 years old. There is no way I could understand life of someone much older than me.

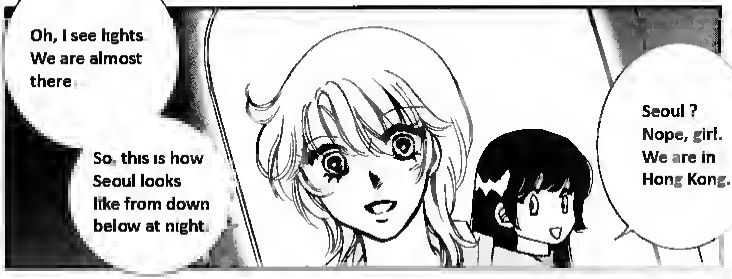
I was starting to accept whatever was happening before my eyes as -

Who or what are you, Seol Hui ?

just every day events while avoiding the most important question...

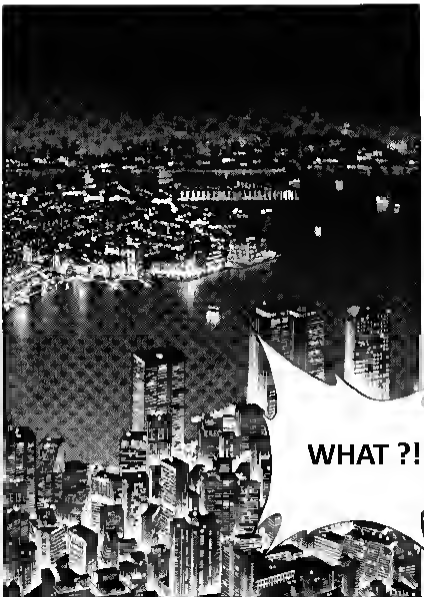

On secon thought...,
I see no point in asking that question ...
Whatever the answer really is, she is right here ... next to me.
Her existence is the answer.

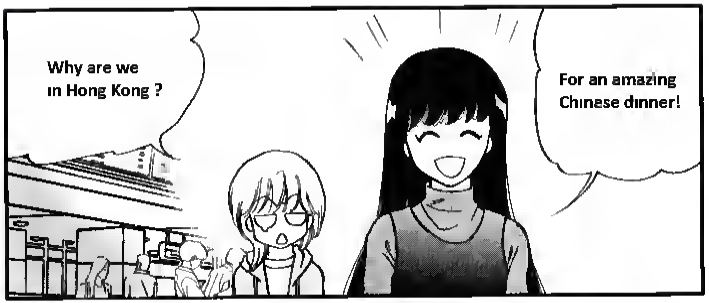


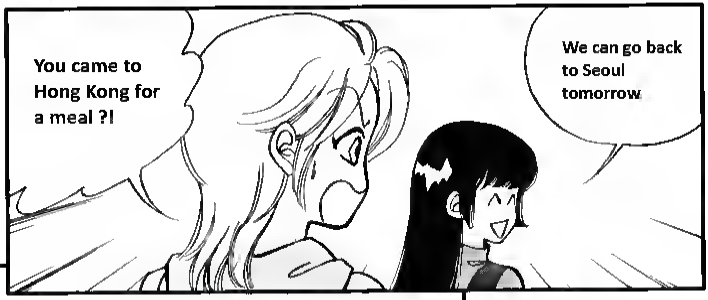

Oh, I see lights
We are almost there
So, this is how Seoul looks like from down below at night
Seoul ?
Nope, girl. We are in Hong Kong.

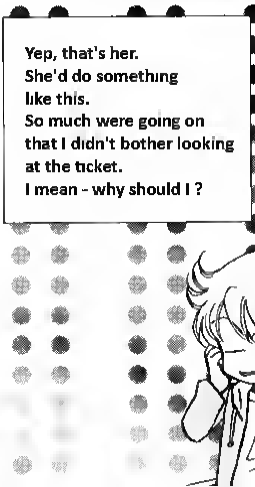
Eh ?

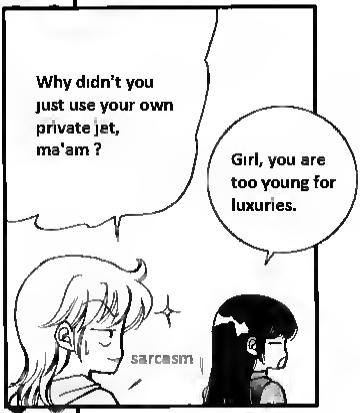
Didn't you see the ticket?

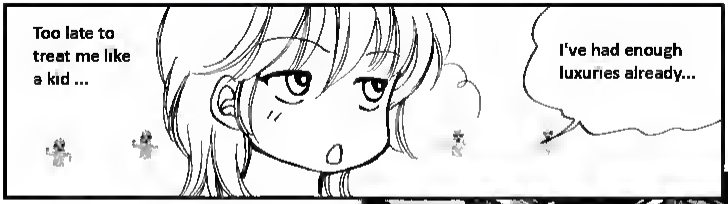

WHAT ?!


Why are we in Hong Kong ?
For an amazing Chinese dinner!

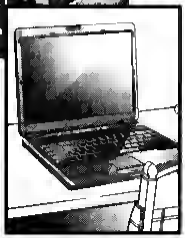

You came to Hong Kong for a meal ?!
We can go back to Seoul tomorrow


Yep, that's her.
She'd do something like this.
So much were going on that I didn't bother looking at the ticket.
I mean - why should I ?


Why didn't you just use your own private jet, ma'am ?
Girl, you are too young for luxuries.
sarcasm


Too late to treat me like a kid ...
I've had enough luxuries already...

So, we are going back to Seoul tomorrow for sure, right ?
If so, it will be 2 full weeks...
On a tutor bus anyway
Kinda chilly
Pretty sight



Ah, high speed internet -
I should send a text.
I am going to take a shower.
The only number I can remmber is Sel's...

Now, we have two guests here -
They will be joining OneKiss -
딩동
Ah ?
나는 그럼
Sei,
I am in Hong Kong right now.
We will be in Seoul tomorrow.
I am sending you this via a laptop since my cell phone can't use roaming services here - Sera
Hong Kong ?
The hell ?
These girls are playing billionaire life style or something.
I haven't even been to Hong Kong, geez !
휙

Yeah, yeah, I get it. Seol Hui is rich. Easy to take someone along when you are rich, I guess.
I mean, she treats me like nobody. That pisses me off.
Does her being rich have something to do with the way she treats me ?
Love you
Only in the former life, I guess ?
So ...
Yes, well ---
Hui-Te hyeong is the most competitive-
Anyway, being highly competitive has helped us to reach this far -
Hey, you aren't any worse.

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-- Hahah
픕서
피

... Lady
Lady, are you alright ?
Yes..., I am fine.
Thank you for your help.
Would you mind telling me who you are and where you reside ?

Of course, my name is Eun-San.
I am a part of a travelling circus that is passing by
I have no home to return to
If you don't mind, I'd like to tag along.

I feel like I am writing a story in my dream.
Anyway, that's how we met, eh ...
I wonder ... What is going to happen when I experience an end to this story ?
One thing is clear. This series of dreams began after encountering her.

Men's consciousness goes deep, layers and layers of different memories
They are unlikely to surface.
But with right stimuli,
I am sure a corresponding memory layer will respond
Yes, you were right. It worked.
Whatever stimuli she gave me, it worked and something triggered inside of me.
Let's see if we were really lovers in our former lives...

Thank you.
You are now
verified.
I am sure you already
have your key with you.
HASBIC BA

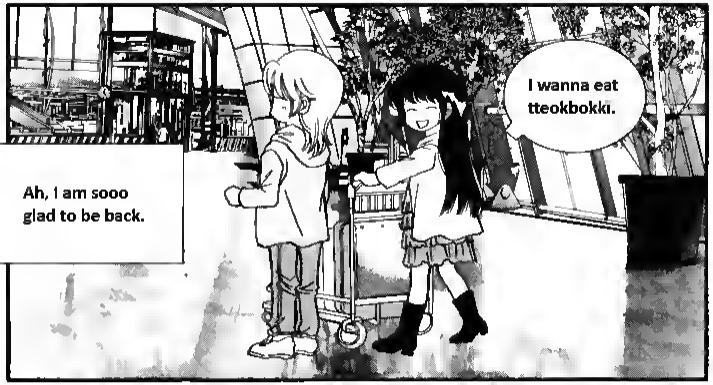
Vera..., this is what you want..., isn't it.
An uncut diamond... 80 caret even... And you put this in a vault without any insurance...
Well, it just happened. If I were to take this out of the country, I'd have to value it and all other paper works..., so I just left it in a bank vault.
I want you to take it to America and value it.

This certainly warrants the trip to Hong Kong.
Where did you get this ?
It's uncut but it's 80 carat.. The value would be .... unthinkable.
Complicated so to speak. And it was a long time ago.
I am not going to sell it, but I want it valued.
Mark it down as a part of my inheritance.
Or... I will sell it when I am broke ?
Which means never.
I understand.
I will contact you when it is done

Don't you want something like this? Doesn't your greed kick in?
Not really. As it stands, I make more than enough money.
I value good clients over chances of theft.
I don't want to retire yet.
Joel had good visions for picking good men, I see.
If you are really grateful, why don't you tell me something about yourself?

S-e-c-r-e-t
Don't worry. I wouldn't dare cheating on someone who comes back alive from gun wounds.
Figured as much
I see
Looks awesome !
Sura's place
surasplace.com
And tastes good ! You went out to meet someone. Is it done?
Yeah, let's hit the airport after this.
So, she had a business.
Yeppers
To Korea for real this time, right ?

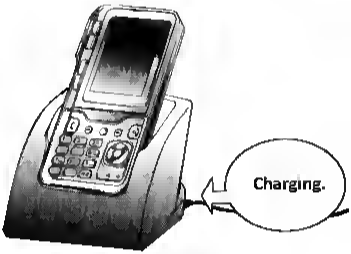
First class seats and I am too young for luxury ?
It's Seoul !

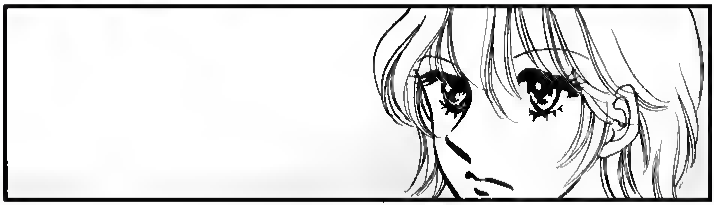

I wanna eat tteokbokki.
Ah, I am sooo glad to be back.

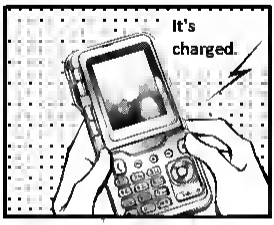
I wanna charge my cell phone.
Do it at home.
I get to see Incheon airport in full detail now. When we left from here, it was night, so I couldn't see it well.

Do I need to clean up the house? It's been 2 weeks.
No need to hurry. Do it tomorrow.
100m

I am going to my room to take a break. Call Arashi.


Charging.

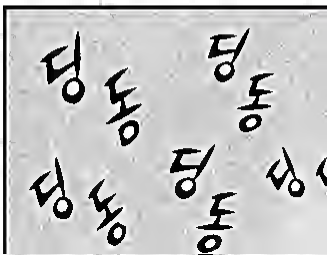




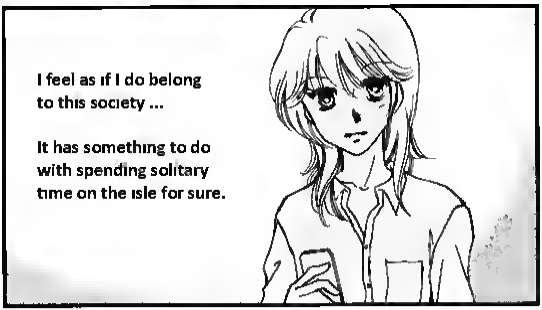
It probably has something to do with being away for 2 weeks.

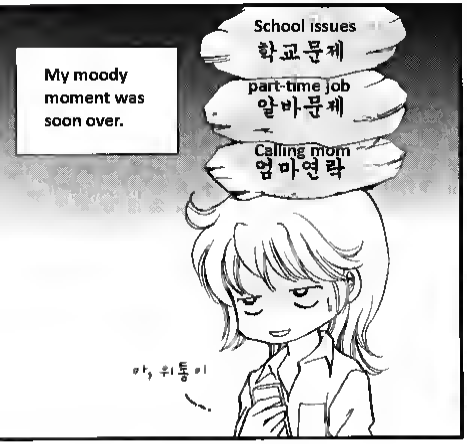
The whole environment looks somewhat... alien yet ... friendly.

I feel as if something inside me changed a bit as well ...



Woah.., a ton of texts
and missed calls.
Ranging from simple spams
and legitimate call/texts...
Well, yeah, I was away for
2 weeks... without telling
anyone.


I feel as if I do belong
to this society ...
It has something to do
with spending solitary
time on the isle for sure.


My moody
moment was
soon over.
School issues
학교문제
part-time job
알바문제
Calling mom
엄마연락
아, 우울이

Time to take care of
the matters..
(Deep breath)
심호흡

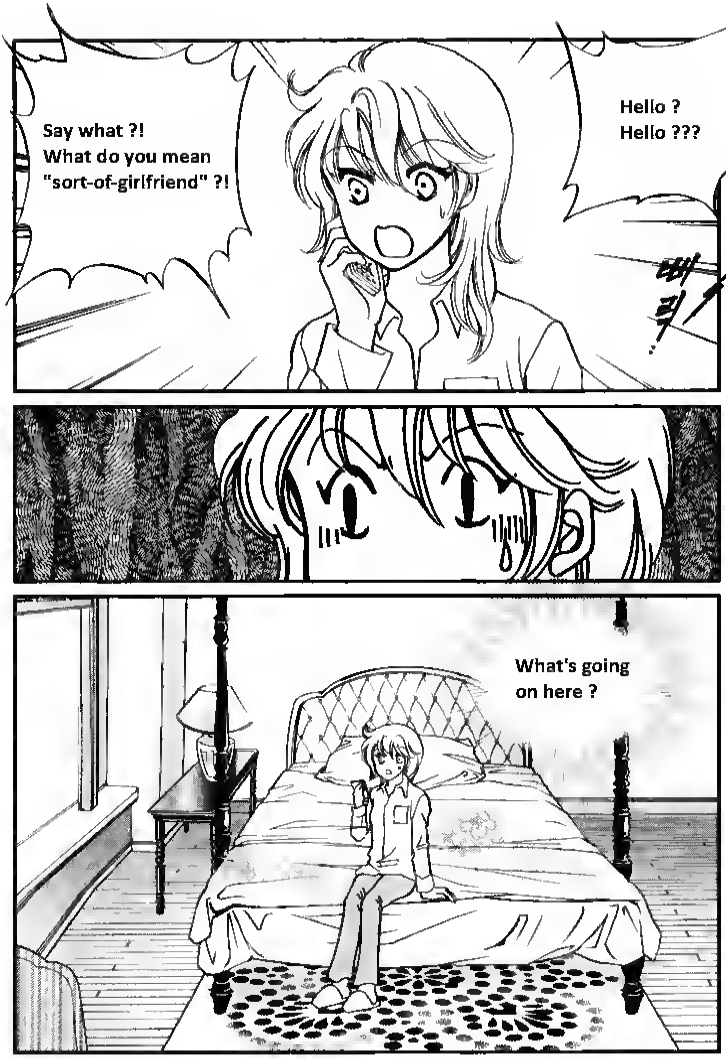
RRRRRR
Nim ?
Where are you ?
*-nim :
Same as "sama"
It's good to hear his voice.
H, hello...
Arashi-nim?
We've come back just now.
We are at home.
Seol Hui just left on a short notice and took me with her, so I didn't have a chance to explain.
I couldn't use my cell phone because my plan doesn't allow me to make calls outside of the country.
Trust me.
I wasn't intentional that you were left out. I was worried about you the whole time.
This is ... uneasy ..
Well..., so...,
you ... can come back now ....

I see.
That's what happened.
YOU'O THINK I'D LET YOU GET AWAY THAT EASILY ?!
YOU TREATED ME LIKE SOME PUPPY !
HIC - !
I thought you were my girlfriend ?
I am sorry ! I am so sorry ! Please forgive me !
Of course, he is angey.
I don't feel that you are my girlfriend.
We are breaking up.

We are ... breaking up ?
Yeah, I will talk to you at home.
And it doesn't even sound serious....
I don't think it even makes any difference at this point.
I mean we haven't done anything a couple would have done
Are we even in a relationship?
So, we are breaking up.
Yeah.
Is this a joke ?
Granted, it was my fault for not contacting him, but what's this ?
How am I supposed to respond ?

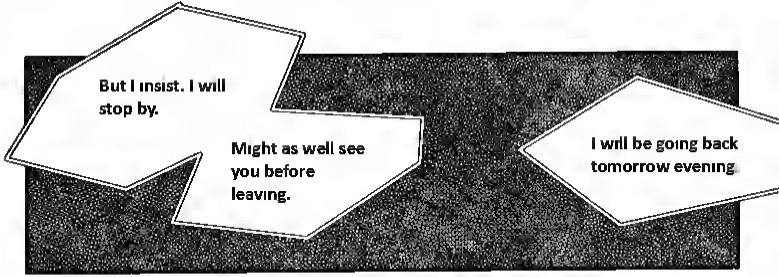
Um..., do we have to break up? Can't I just apologize and get it over with?
No, we must break up.
I see... Yes.
The whole thing felt like a big joke from the start anyway. I can't say I am too surprised it ends like this.
Eh ?
You know, when I asked you to be my girlfriend, you just said, yes.
And now I ask you to break up and now you also say, yes. Which one is the real yes ?

Well, you are asking me to break up, so ...
What does he want ?
And you have no opinion ?
I am not saying that.
Of course, I want a proper relationship.
But the words aren't coming out.
Anyway, I've got a sort-of-girlfriend from Japan coming.
Tell Seol Hui that she got another guest.
뭐?
What ?
Sura's place
surasplace.com


Say what ?!
What do you mean
"sort-of-girlfriend" ?!
Hello ?
Hello ???
What's going
on here ?

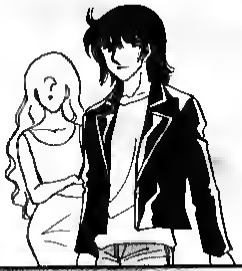
What's this ?
As soon as we broke up, he brings up a new girlfriend right away ?
Call him again?
I did agree on breaking up just a moment ago.
I felt like I did change a little after the long trip.
But the reality is that it's not easy to change oneself ...

Why can't I say what I want whenever I want ?
I don't know. I just don't know.
핫
Anyway, time to move on.
잔소리 잔소리 잔소리잔소
잔소리 잔소리 잔소리 잔
stuff - stuff - stuff -
Yes, I am home now.
You are staying at brother's?
To here ?
No, she said you don't have to thank her.



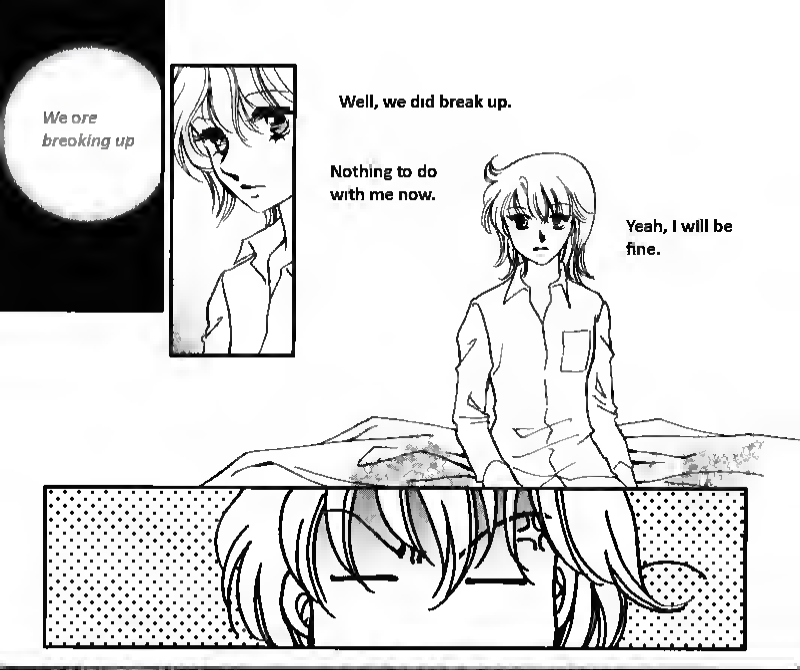
Tomorrow ?

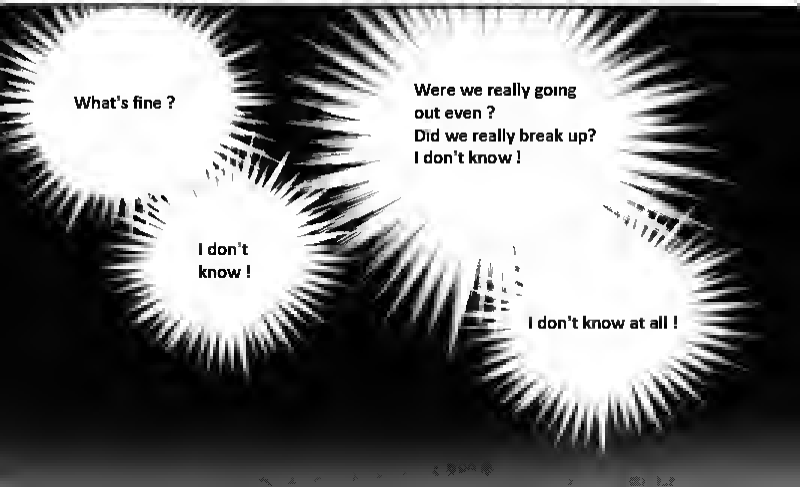
Any chance Arashi might come back tomorrow ?

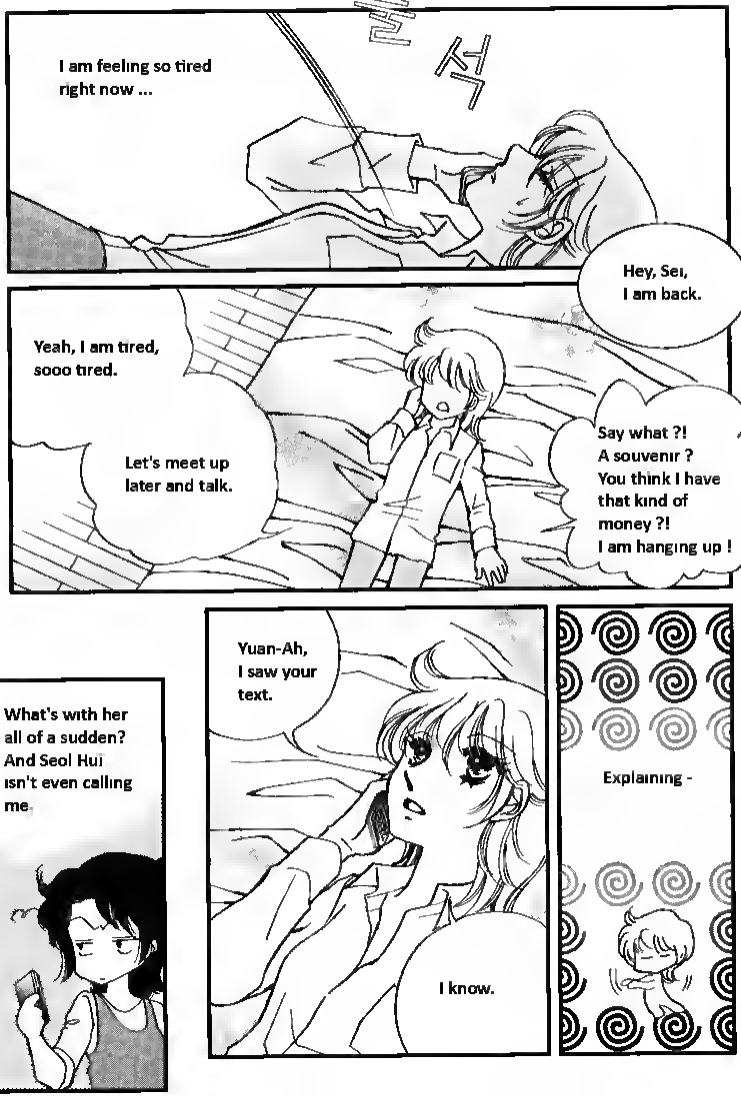


He didn't say when... Though it sounded like soon ...

It feels like I have nothing to do with it.
Yet it feels like I have something to do with it ...
I have this strange feeling that they shouldn't run into each other...


We are breaking up
Well, we did break up.
Nothing to do with me now.
Yeah, I will be fine.


What's fine ?
Were we really going out even ?
Did we really break up?
I don't know !
I don't know !
I don't know at all !


I am feeling so tired right now ...
Hey, Sei, I am back.
Yeah, I am tired, sooo tired.
Let's meet up later and talk.
Say what ?! A souvenir ? You think I have that kind of money ?! I am hanging up !
What's with her all of a sudden? And Seol Hui isn't even calling me.
Yuan-Ah, I saw your text.
I know.
Explaining -

.... Yeah, I will explain in more detail later.

See you.

And it's done... for the day. Tomorrow.., I will deal with school ...

Doesn't Seol Hui have anyone to call ?

Well, her relatives in America and Marcus perhaps ...

Having Marcus alone feels like enough...

.... If Seol Hui is indeed as old as the old French woman ...

Her close friends may have already all passed away.

Perhaps, living for too long is not good ...

It might be good to live until, like, 120 yeors old
Perhaps, she is older than that.
But won't she get lonelier as she gets older ?
The weird thing is ...
Even though I know she may be really old, seeing her act all bright and cheerful..., it makes me forget all that.
She feels like she's just a good friend
Well, that was a good sleep ! I wanna eat tteokbokki now.

Tteokbokki in morning ?
Yep !
I need to go to the school and pay a visit to where I worked.
My mother also wants to see you in evening. Is that okay ?
Ah, sure. How about Arashi?
I don't know when though...
He said ... he's going to bring a girl-friend ...
Girlfriend? Ah, Rika !
You are no longer his girlfriend then ?

know her?

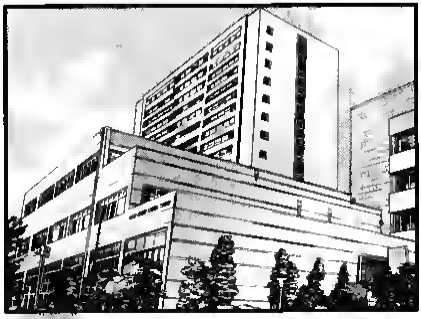
He wanted to break up.

So, I broke up with him.

Figured as much.

• • •

Well, I sort of expected that kind of reaction ...

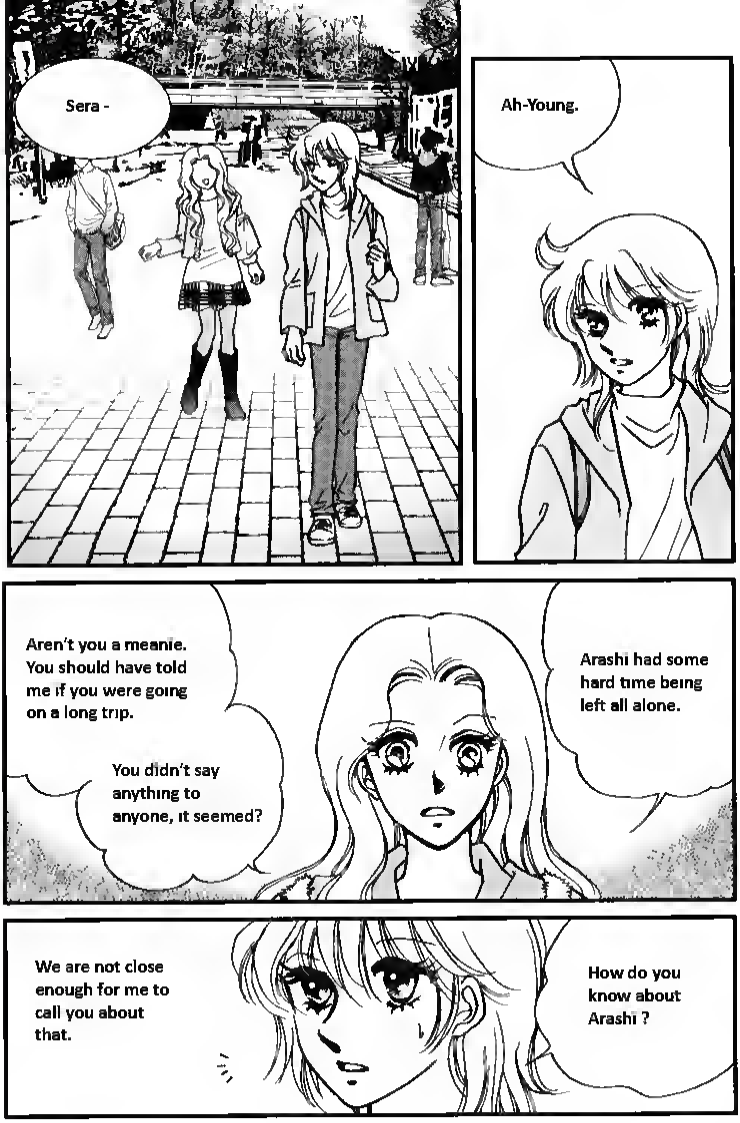


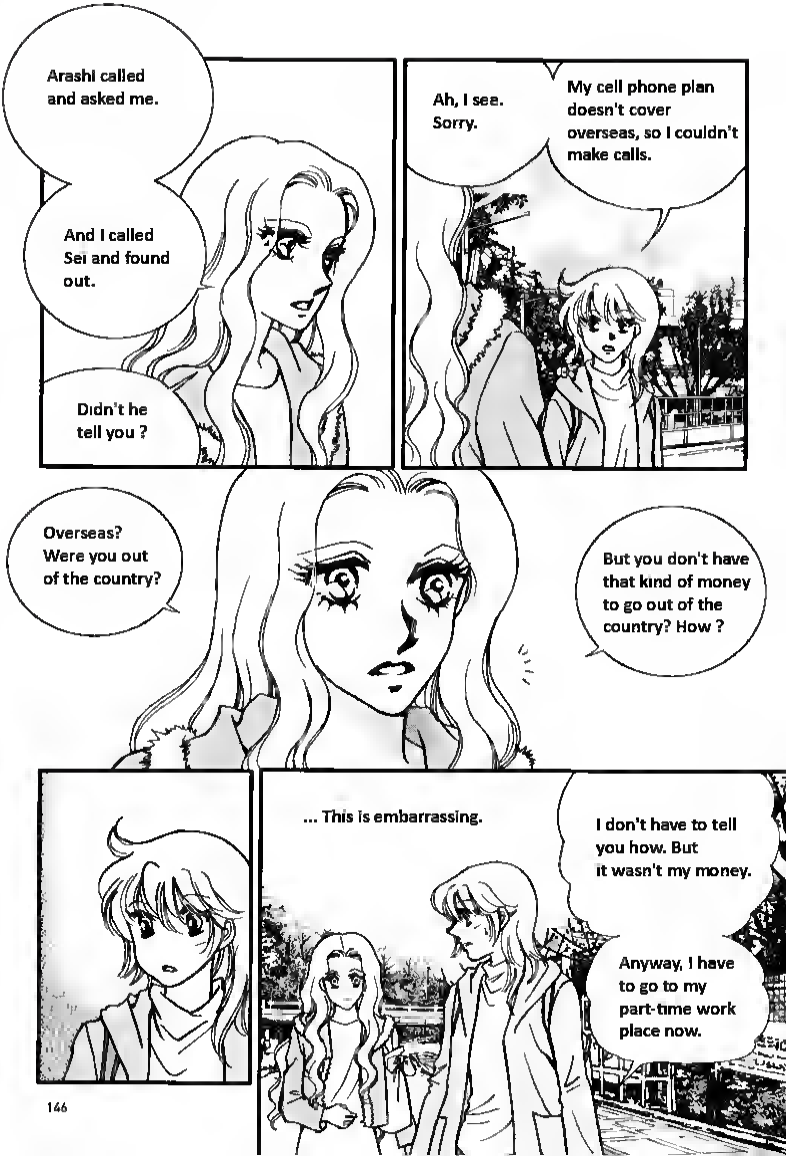
So, it's "Rika" ?

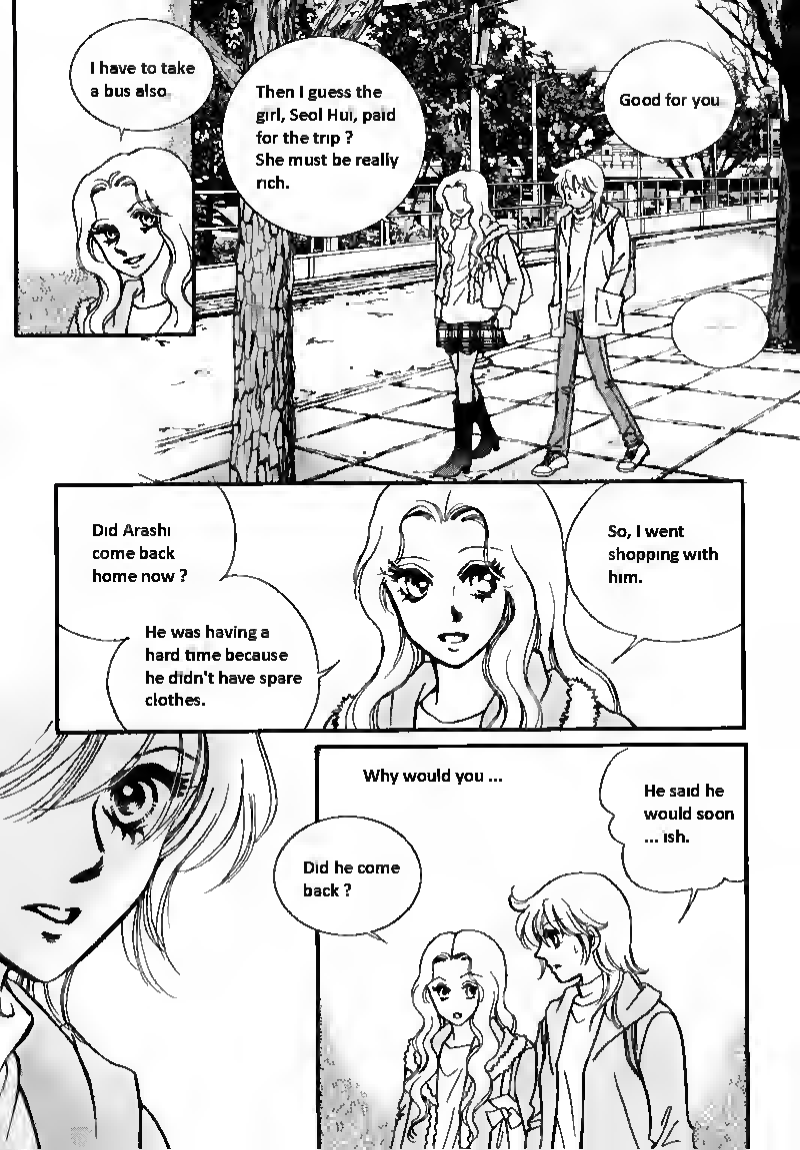
She might be the real girlfriend since Seol Hui also knows her.

I thought I might have skipped too many classes, but it looks like I am okay.
I shouldn't skip any more classes from now on though.

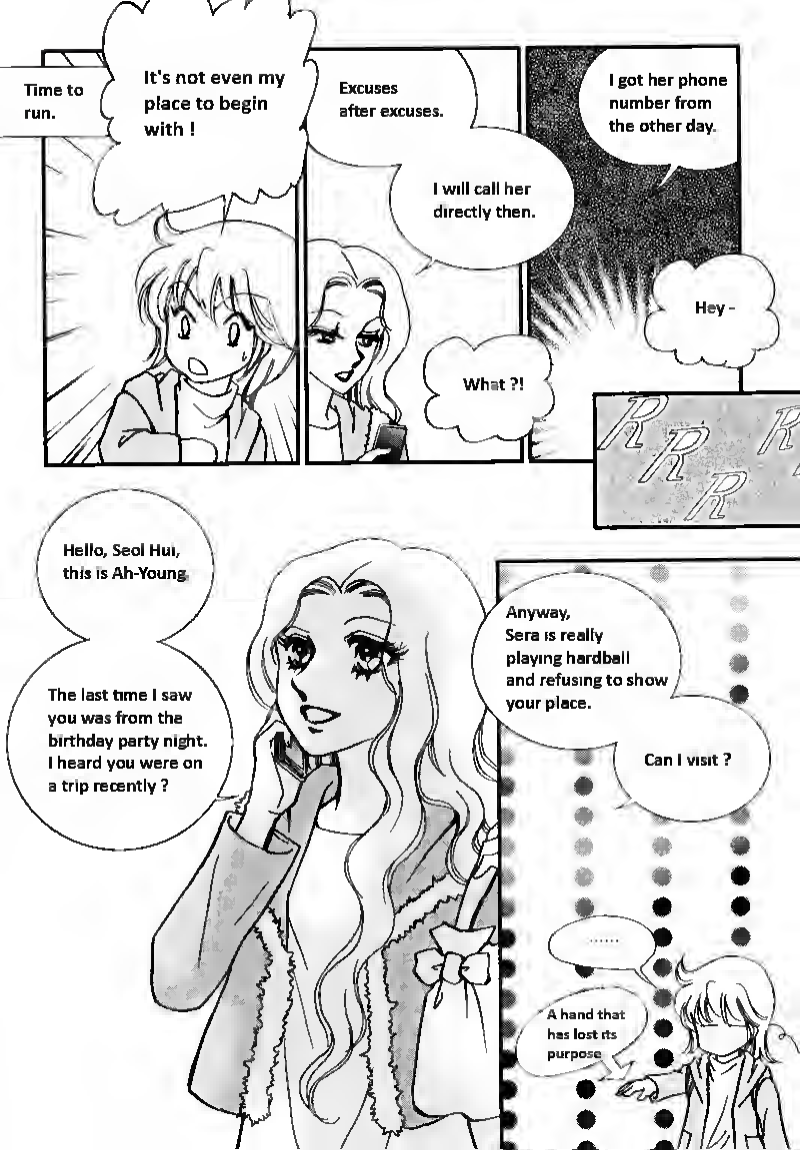
Sura's place
surasplace.com

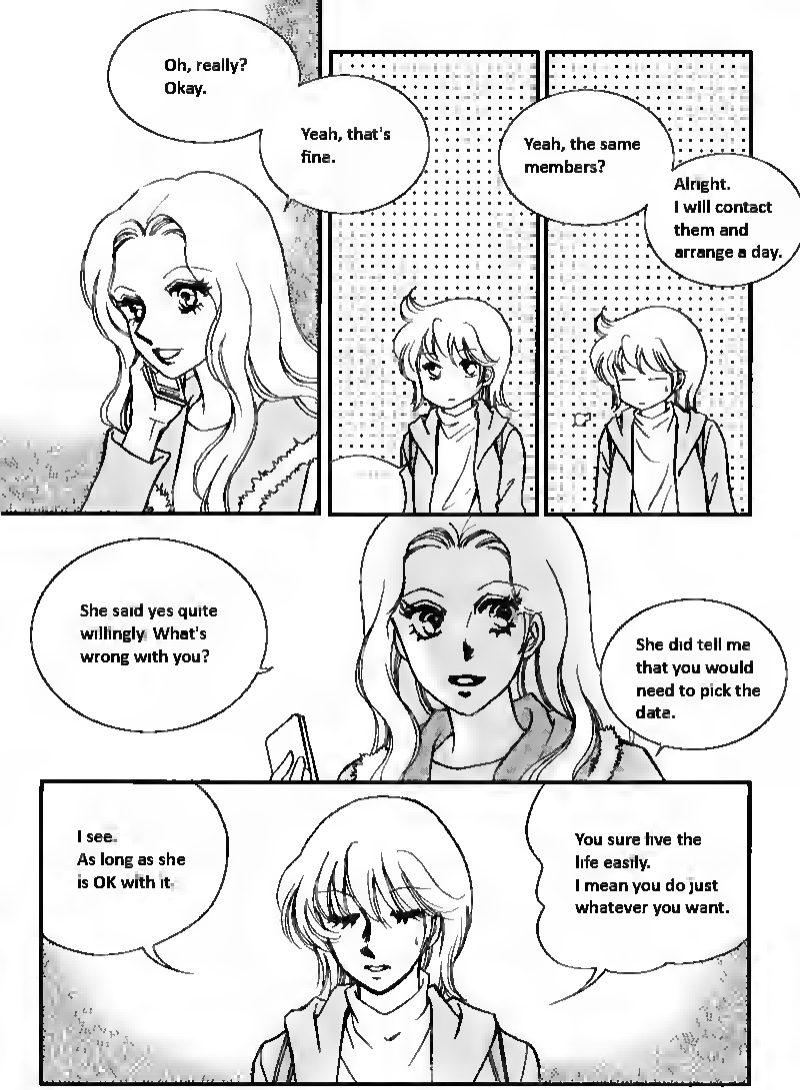

Sera -
Ah-Young.
Aren't you a meanie. You should have told me if you were going on a long trip.
You didn't say anything to anyone, it seemed?
Arashi had some hard time being left all alone.
We are not close enough for me to call you about that.
How do you know about Arashi ?

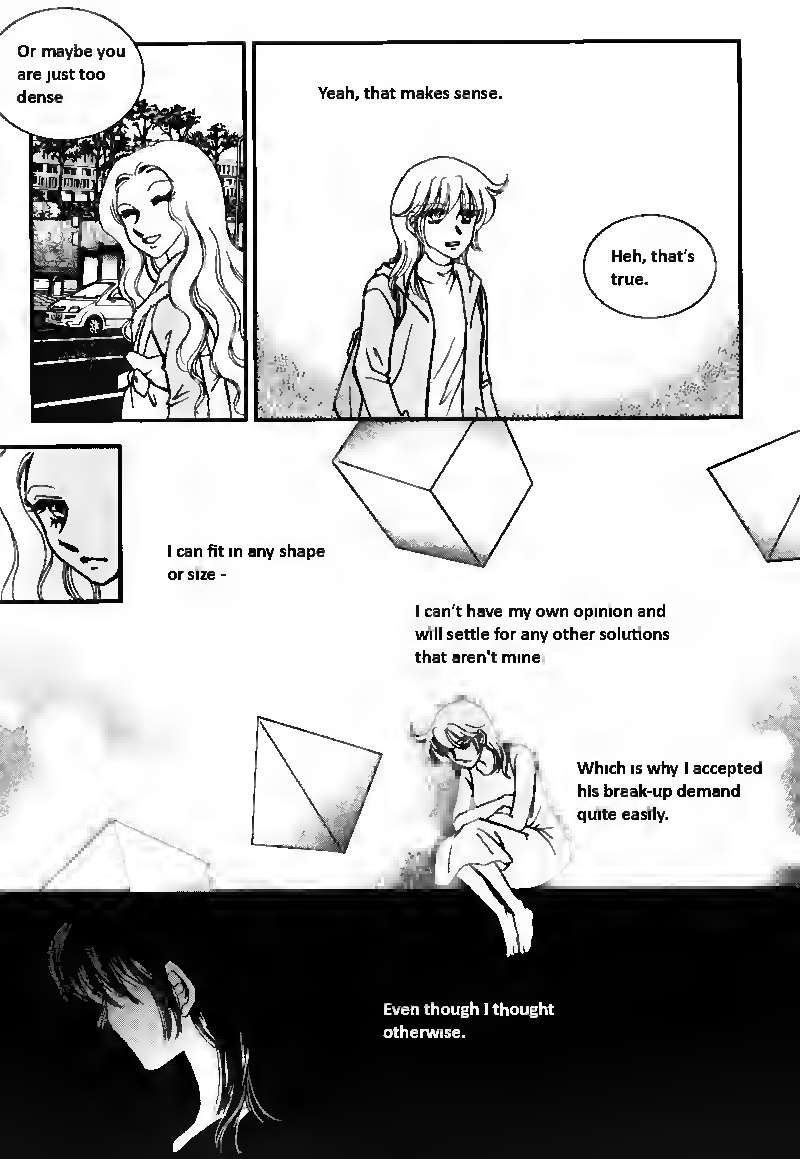

Arashi called and asked me.
And I called Sei and found out.
Didn't he tell you ?
Ah, I see. Sorry.
My cell phone plan doesn't cover overseas, so I couldn't make calls.
Overseas? Were you out of the country?
But you don't have that kind of money to go out of the country? How ?
... This is embarrassing.
I don't have to tell you how. But it wasn't my money.
Anyway, I have to go to my part-time work place now.


I have to take a bus also.
Then I guess the girl, Seol Hui, paid for the trip ? She must be really rich.
Good for you
Did Arashi come back home now ?
He was having a hard time because he didn't have spare clothes.
So, I went shopping with him.
Why would you ...
Did he come back ?
He said he would soon ... ish.

We are breaking up
I wanted to ask "Why would you go shopping with him?" but I could not. After all, I am not his anything anymore.
I see. Could I visit your place later?
It's not mine. It's Seol Hui's.
I don't think she would refuse bringing your brings over?
I am just curious. Show me the place once.
Speaking of which, we never had a party for moving into the new place.
Even Yun-Ah said she wanted to see the place.
You can call her as well.
I will bring a cake.


Time to run.
It's not even my place to begin with !
Excuses after excuses.
I will call her directly then.
I got her phone number from the other day.
Hey -
What ?!
Hello, Seol Hui, this is Ah-Young.
The last time I saw you was from the birthday party night. I heard you were on a trip recently ?
Anyway, Sera is really playing hardball and refusing to show your place.
Can I visit ?
.....
A hand that has lost its purpose


Oh, really?
Okay.
Yeah, that's fine.
Yeah, the same members?
Alright.
I will contact them and arrange a day.
She said yes quite willingly. What's wrong with you?
She did tell me that you would need to pick the date.
I see.
As long as she is OK with it.
You sure live the life easily.
I mean you do just whatever you want.


Or maybe you are just too dense
Yeah, that makes sense.
Heh, that's true.
I can fit in any shape or size -
I can't have my own opinion and will settle for any other solutions that aren't mine
Which is why I accepted his break-up demand quite easily.
Even though I thought otherwise.

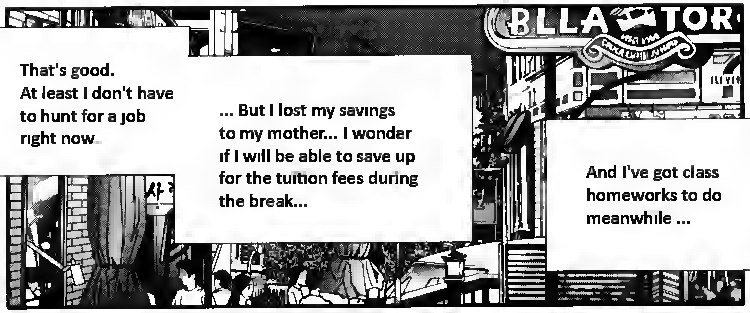
Some say a dream can come true if one truly wishes it hard, from the bottom of his heart.

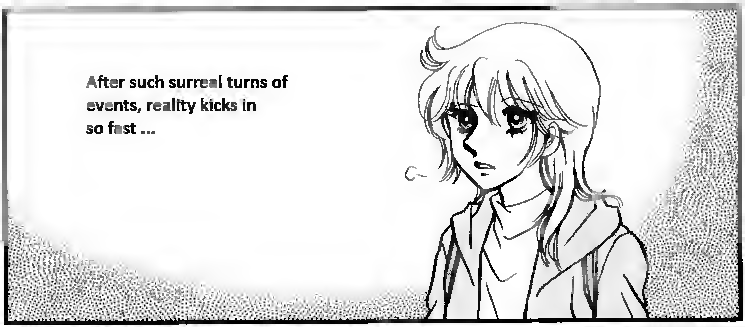
On the other hand, there is also an old saying that what you want will only increase if you keep wanting more.

And in my case, I'd have to agree with the second saying.

Will my mind regarding this change ever ?

I just wanted to apologize.
I know it's way way late.
....., so you are quting then ?
Eh...?
I thought I was fired automatically.
Sure, I'd love to fire you. But you did come back to apologize even when I don't owe you any wage.
And a new girl I hired stopped coming after only a week, so I kinda need someone to replace her ... desperately.
I see. I can still work only until the break.
Why until the break?
I need a full time job during the break to pay for my tuitions.
Oh, I see. That's fine


That's good.
At least I don't have to hunt for a job right now.
... But I lost my savings to my mother... I wonder if I will be able to save up for the tuition fees during the break...
And I've got class homeworks to do meanwhile ...


After such surreal turns of events, reality kicks in so fast ...

On a bright side, I think I have a good idea for a new scenario.
Well ...
Simply cuz I felt like it'd be fun.

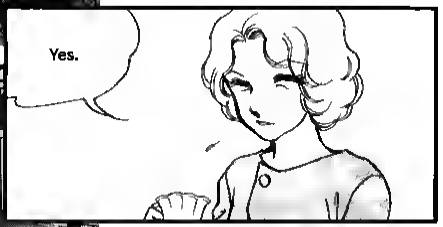
Trips are good.
Trips I had was sort of ... out of control though.
To be hoenst, I don't even feel like I was on a trip ....
I mean I don't even have pictures

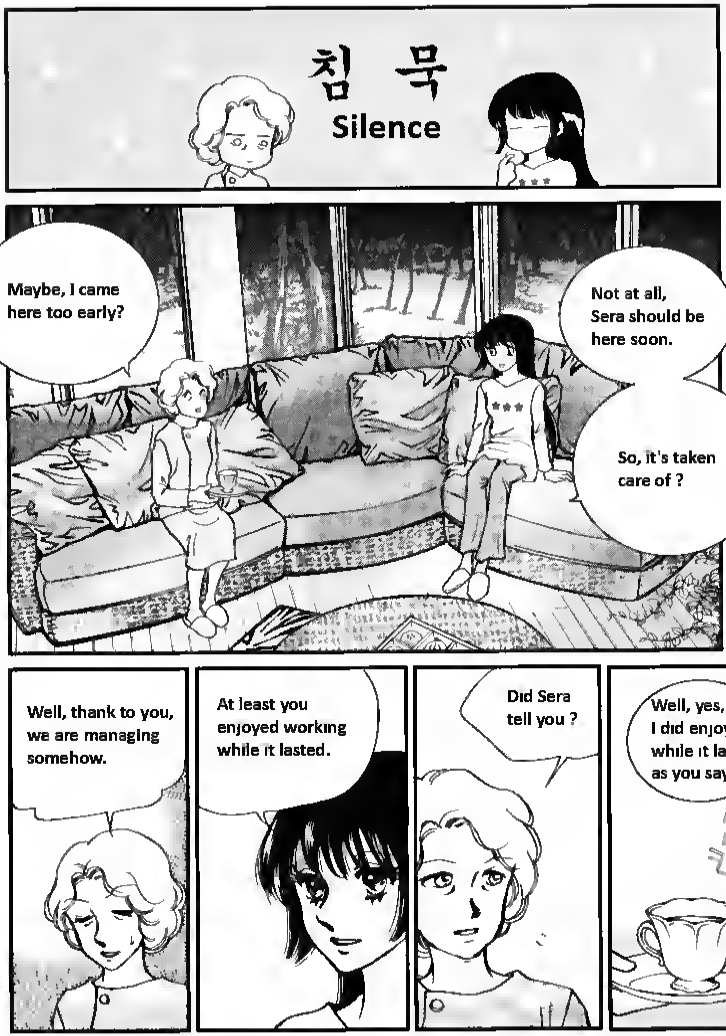
Meanwhile,
I felt strongly
that

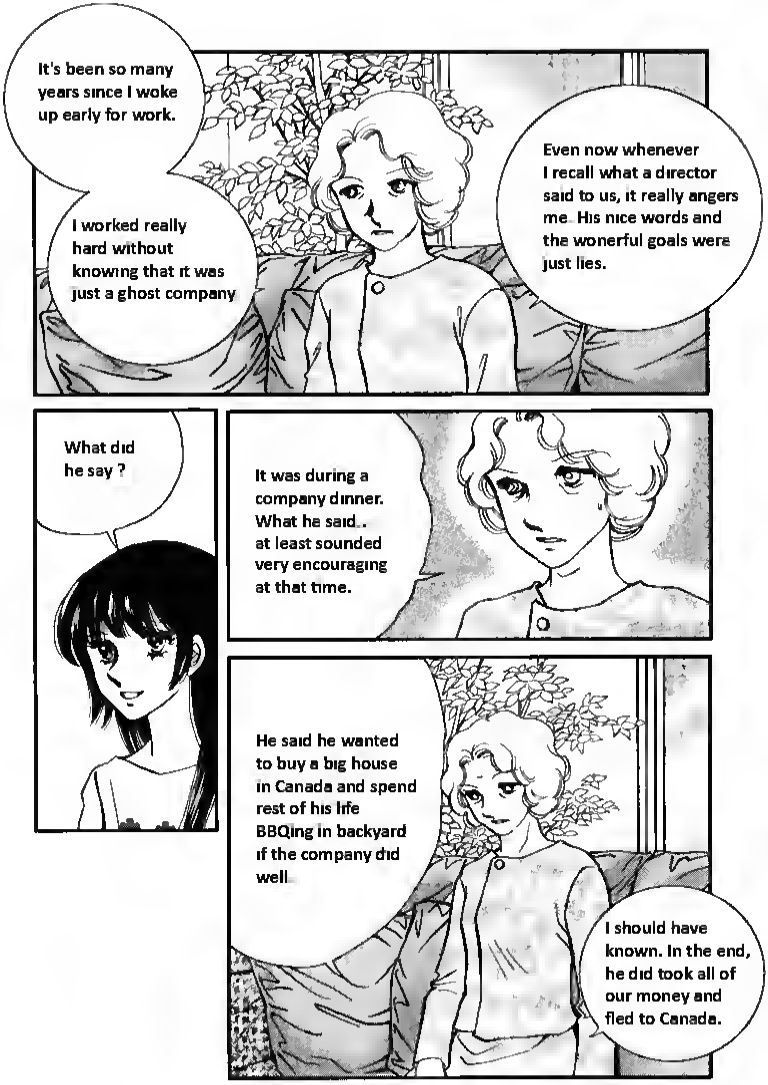
I wanted to
go on a trip

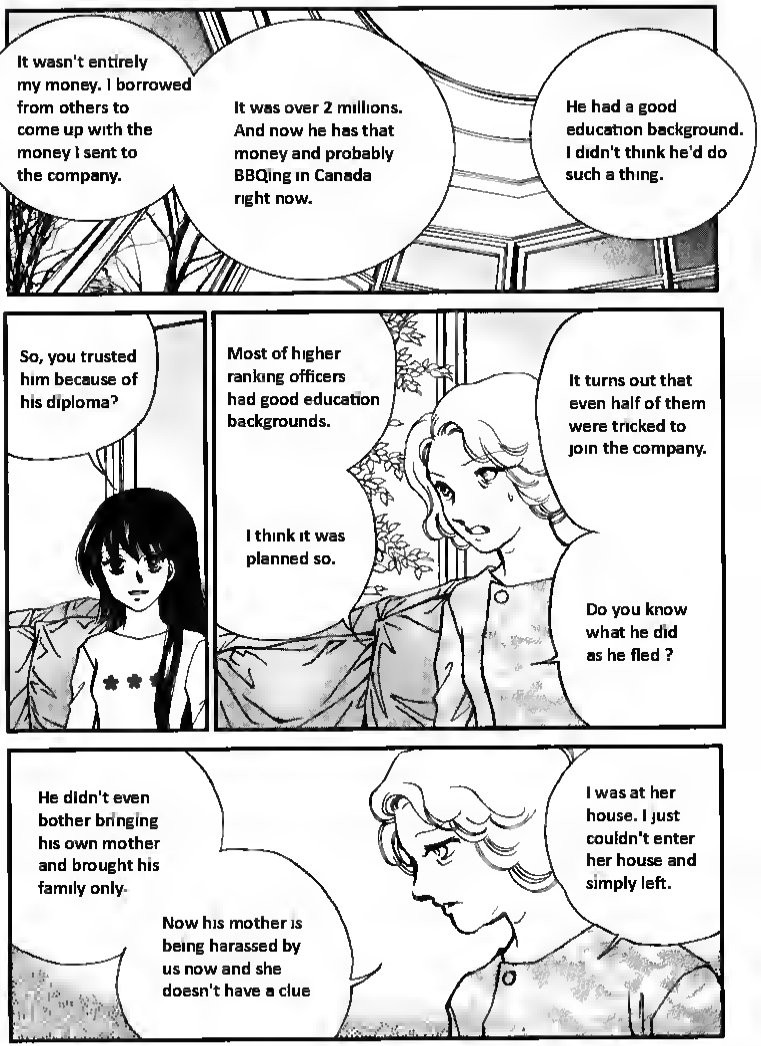
one day

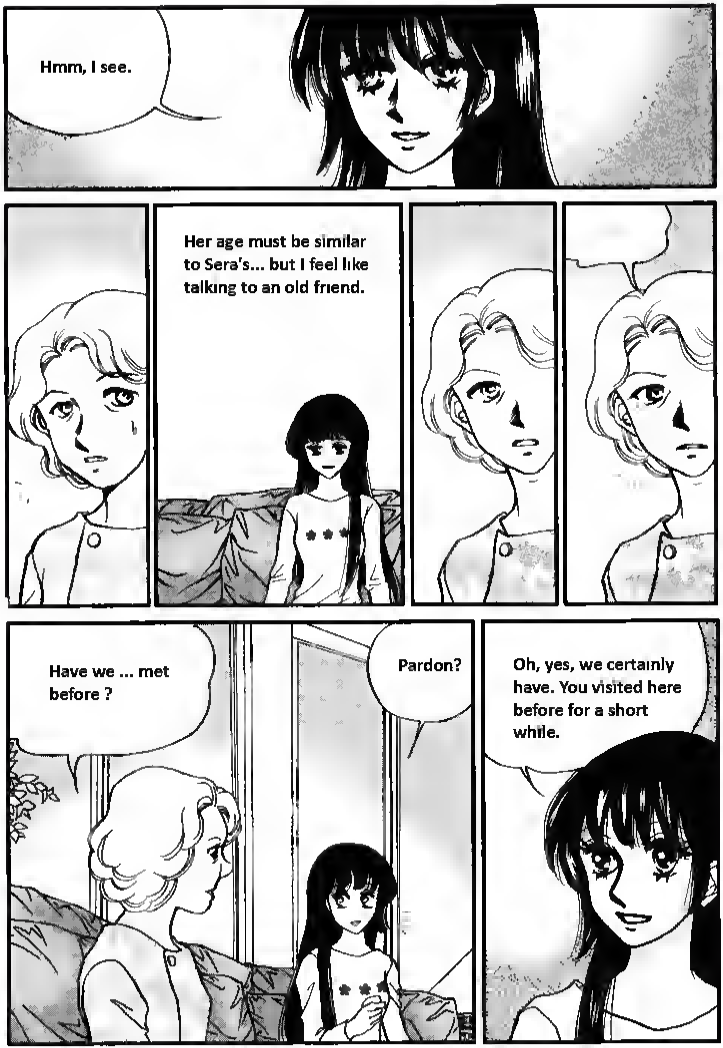
with my own
money.

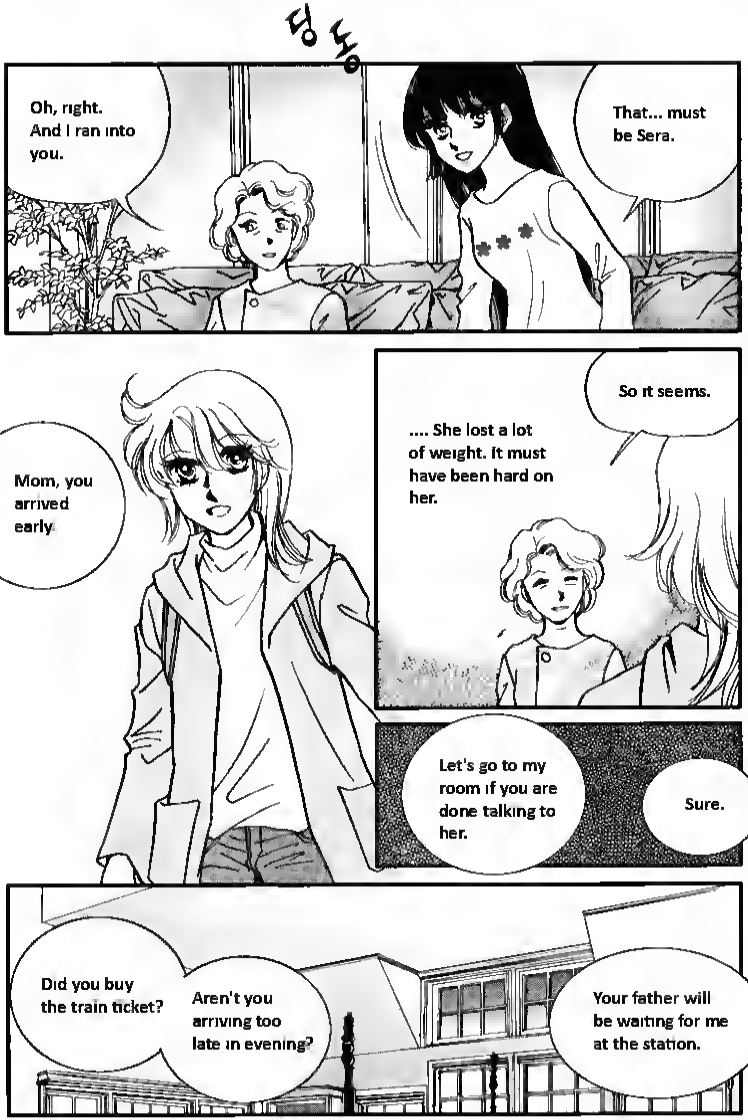



침 묵
Silence
Maybe, I came here too early?
Not at all, Sera should be here soon.
So, it's taken care of ?
Well, thank to you, we are managing somehow.
At least you enjoyed working while it lasted.
Did Sera tell you ?
Well, yes, I did enjoy while it lasted as you say.
달그닥

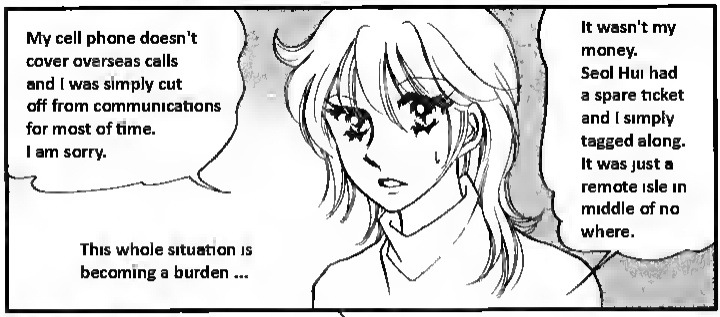

It's been so many years since I woke up early for work.
I worked really hard without knowing that it was just a ghost company
Even now whenever I recall what a director said to us, it really angers me. His nice words and the wonerful goals were just lies.
What did he say ?
It was during a company dinner. What he said.. at least sounded very encouraging at that time.
He said he wanted to buy a big house in Canada and spend rest of his life BBQing in backyard if the company did well.
I should have known. In the end, he did took all of our money and fled to Canada.


It wasn't entirely my money. I borrowed from others to come up with the money I sent to the company.
It was over 2 millions. And now he has that money and probably BBQing in Canada right now.
He had a good education background. I didn't think he'd do such a thing.
So, you trusted him because of his diploma?
Most of higher ranking officers had good education backgrounds.
I think it was planned so.
It turns out that even half of them were tricked to join the company.
Do you know what he did as he fled ?
He didn't even bother bringing his own mother and brought his family only.
Now his mother is being harassed by us now and she doesn't have a clue
I was at her house. I just couldn't enter her house and simply left.

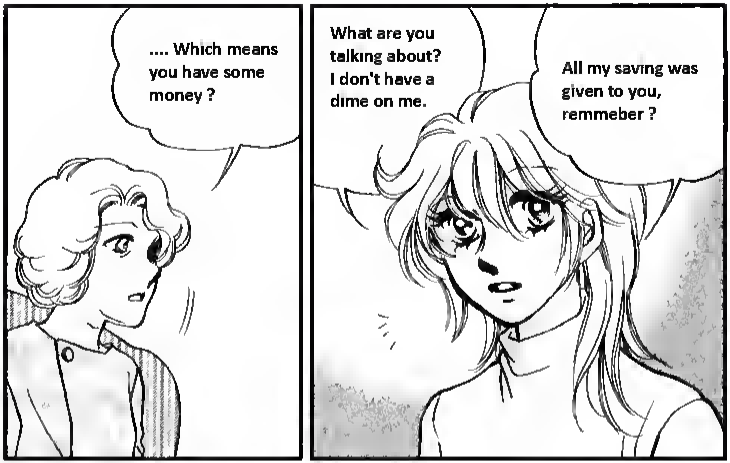

Hmm, I see.
Her age must be similar to Sera's... but I feel like talking to an old friend.
Have we ... met before ?
Pardon?
Oh, yes, we certainly have. You visited here before for a short while.

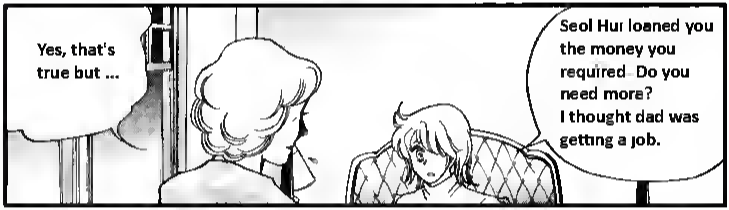

딩동
Oh, right. And I ran into you.
That... must be Sera.
So it seems.
.... She lost a lot of weight. It must have been hard on her.
Mom, you arrived early.
Let's go to my room if you are done talking to her.
Sure.
Did you buy the train ticket?
Aren't you arriving too late in evening?
Your father will be waiting for me at the station.

Where did you for your trip that I couldn't contact you for 2 weeks ?
Well...

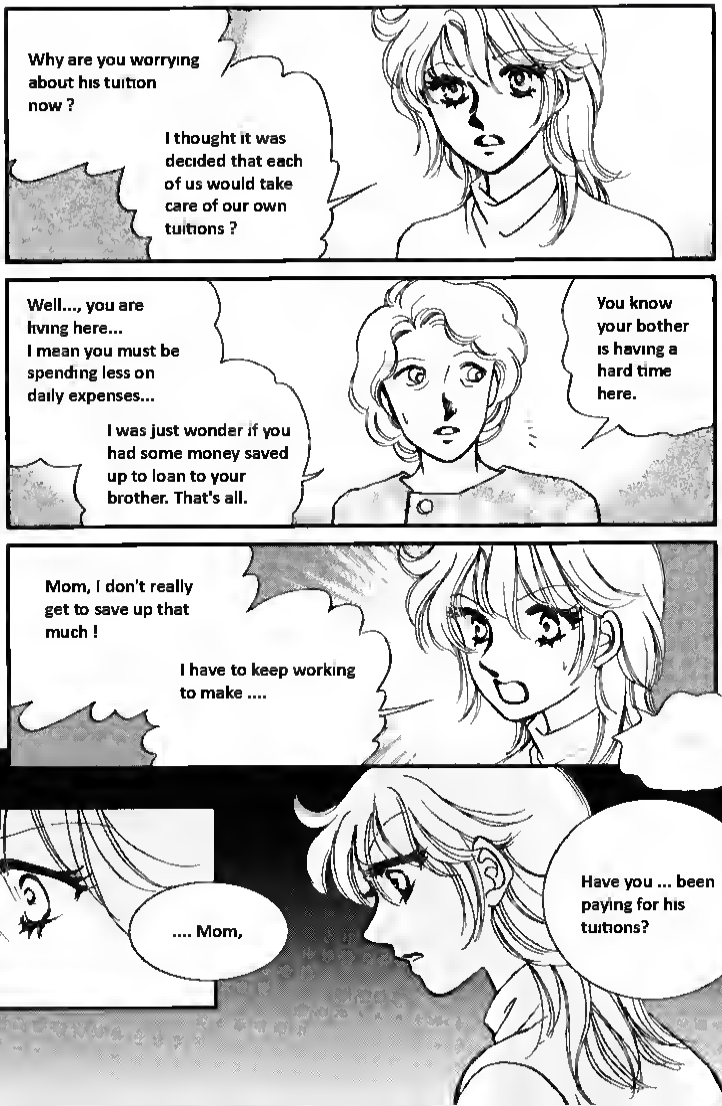

My cell phone doesn't cover overseas calls and I was simply cut off from communications for most of time. I am sorry.
It wasn't my money. Seol Hui had a spare ticket and I simply tagged along. It was just a remote isle in middle of no where.
This whole situation is becoming a burden ...

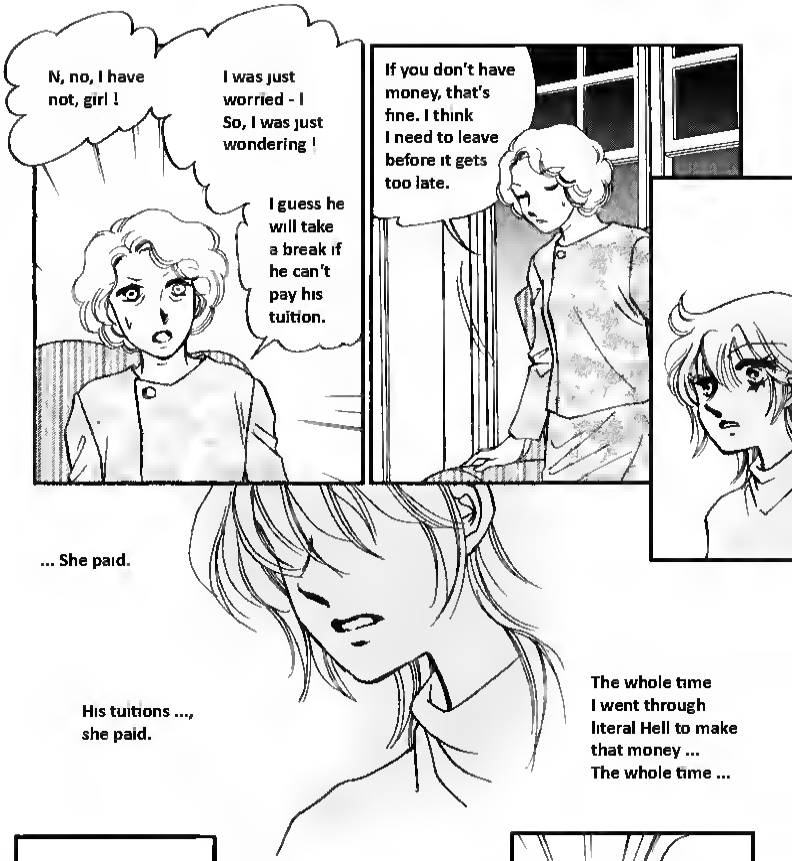
I see... Good for you
I guess it's no use for everyone to suffer. At least you had some good time


.... Which means you have some money ?
What are you talking about? I don't have a dime on me.
All my saving was given to you, remmeber ?


Yes, that's true but ...
Seol Hui loaned you the money you required. Do you need more? I thought dad was getting a job.

Well, her money and we had to loan the rest somehow.
The problem is the interest every month. It's... too much.
And seeing your brother today, I am worried about his tuition.


Why are you worrying about his tuition now ?
I thought it was decided that each of us would take care of our own tuitions ?
Well..., you are living here... I mean you must be spending less on daily expenses...
I was just wonder if you had some money saved up to loan to your brother. That's all.
You know your bother is having a hard time here.
Mom, I don't really get to save up that much !
I have to keep working to make ....
.... Mom,
Have you ... been paying for his tuitions?


N, no, I have not, girl !
I was just worried - I So, I was just wondering !
I guess he will take a break if he can't pay his tuition.
If you don't have money, that's fine. I think I need to leave before it gets too late.
... She paid.
His tuitions ..., she paid.
The whole time I went through literal Hell to make that money ... The whole time ...
Girl -

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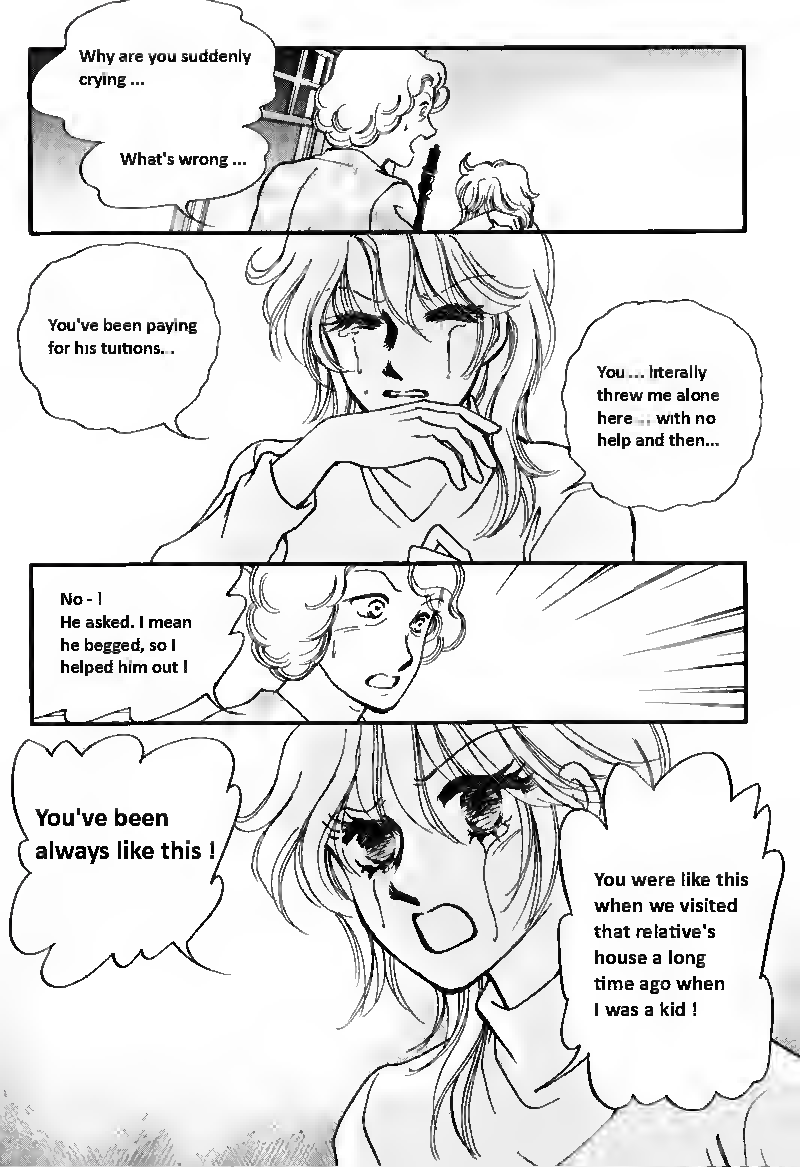
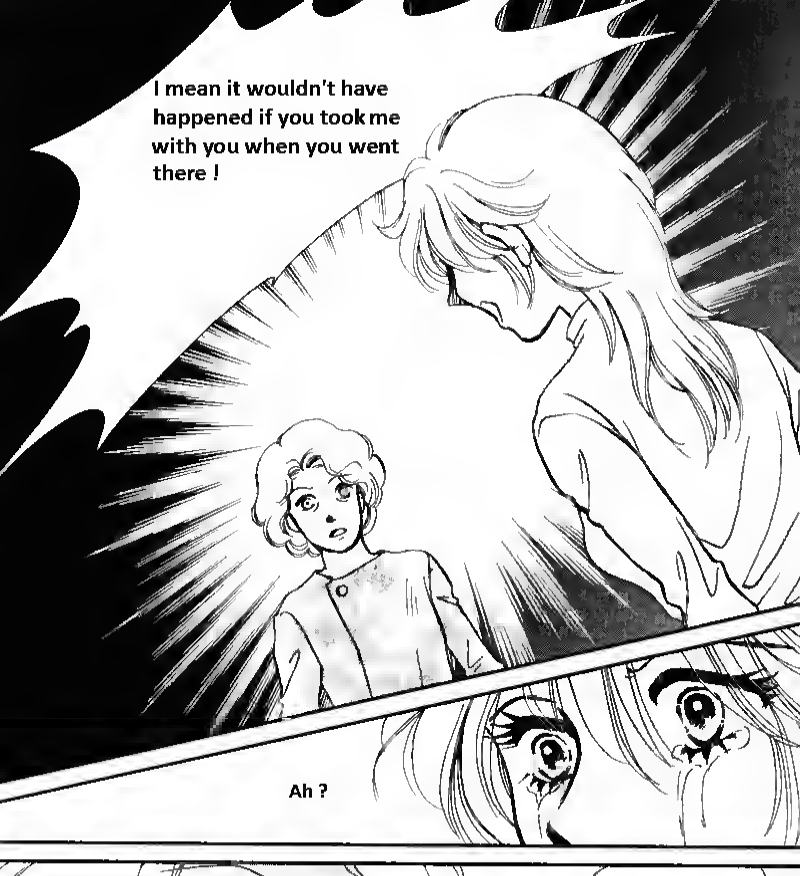
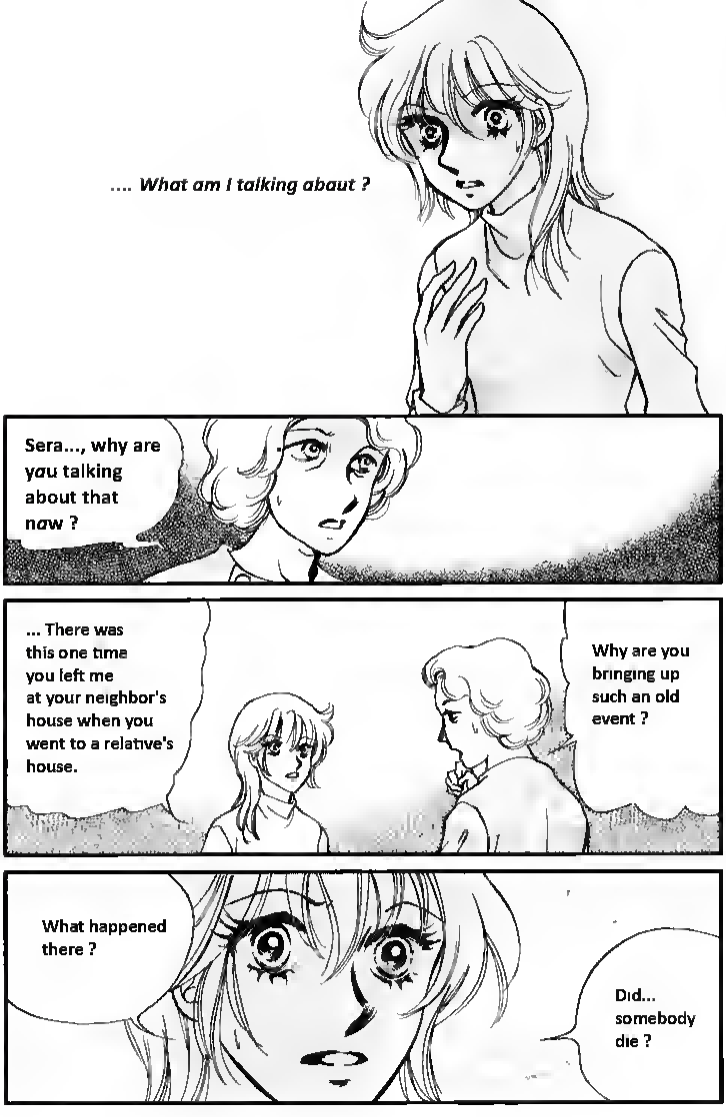
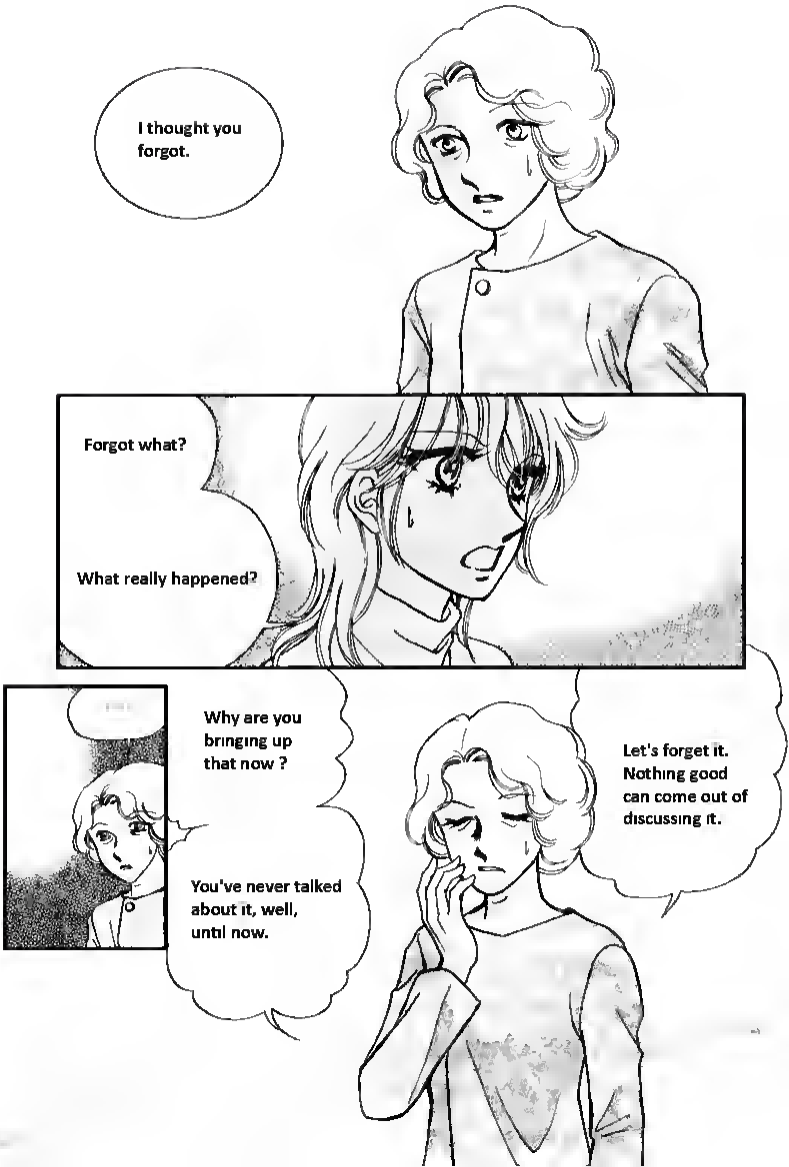
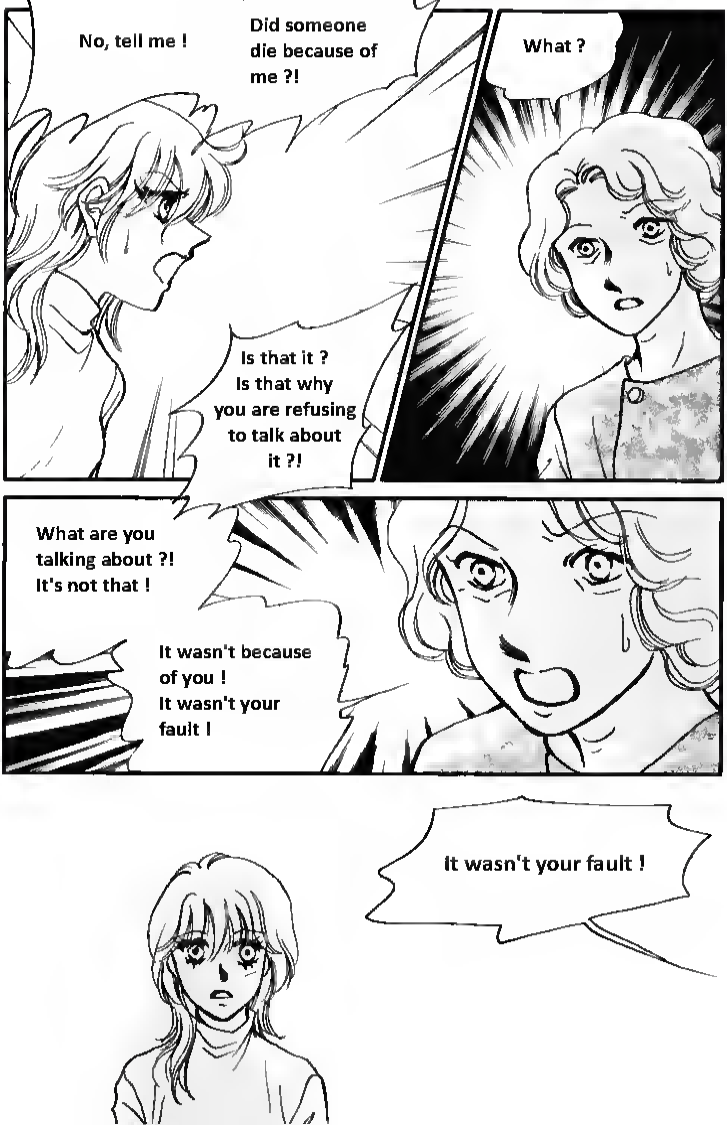

Why are you suddenly crying ...
What's wrong ...
You've been paying for his tuitions. .
You ... literally threw me alone here .. with no help and then...
No - I
He asked. I mean he begged, so I helped him out I
You've been always like this !
You were like this when we visited that relative's house a long time ago when I was a kid !



Because of you, my son died ...

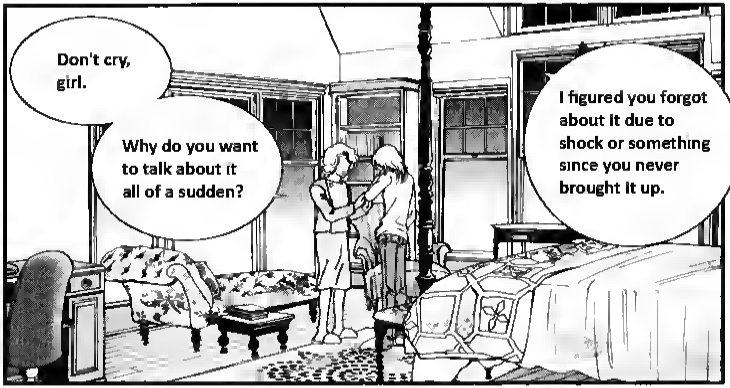

.... What am I talking about ?
Sera..., why are you talking about that now ?
... There was this one time you left me at your neighbor's house when you went to a relative's house.
Why are you bringing up such an old event ?
What happened there ?
Did... somebody die ?

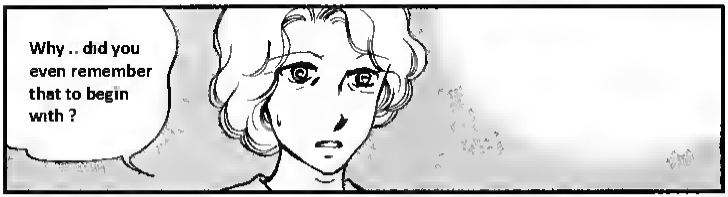

I thought you forgot.
Forgot what?
What really happened?
Why are you bringing up that now ?
You've never talked about it, well, until now.
Let's forget it. Nothing good can come out of discussing it.


No, tell me !
Did someone die because of me ?!
What ?
Is that it ? Is that why you are refusing to talk about it ?!
What are you talking about ?! It's not that !
It wasn't because of you ! It wasn't your fault !
It wasn't your fault !

I don't even know what really happened.

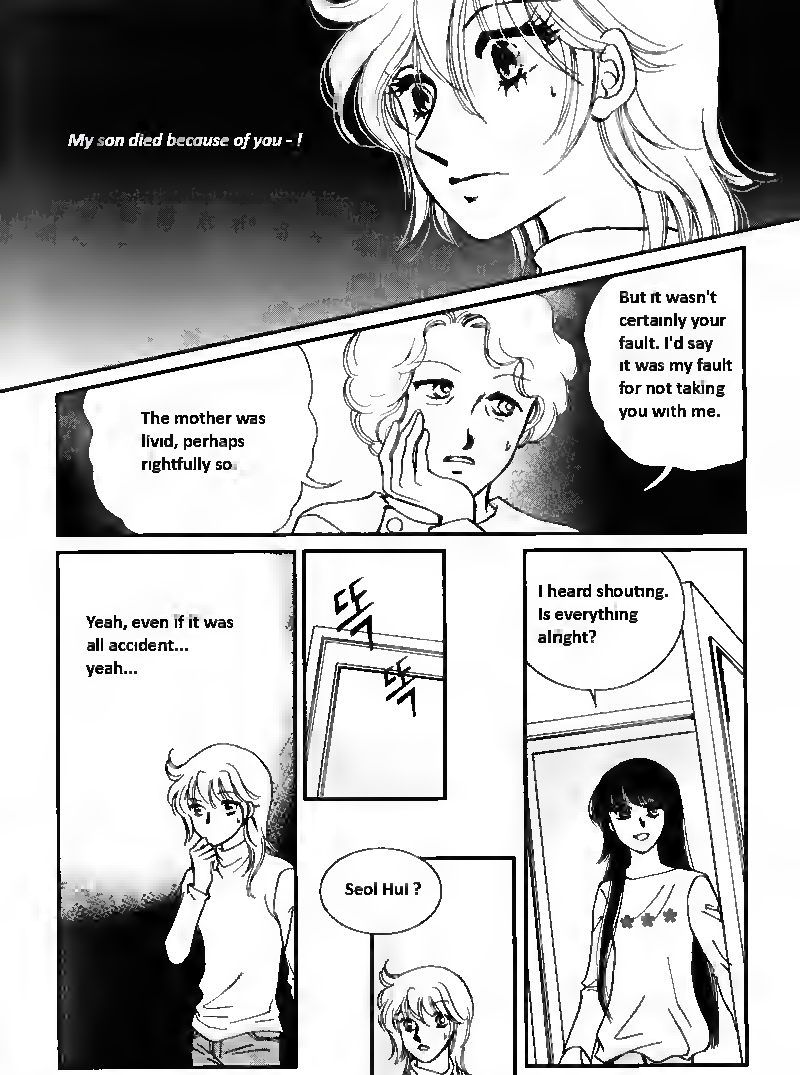
And even before I could talk about it, I was shut off by my mom telling me that it wasn't my fault.


Don't cry, girl.
Why do you want to talk about it all of a sudden?
I figured you forgot about it due to shock or something since you never brought it up.


Why .. did you even remember that to begin with ?

Can't you just tell me what really happened?
That's the only part I recall rather clearly.
My memories are mostly hazed. But sometimes I remember being lost on streets.
Another detail I remember is that there was someon who took me home.

The thing is I recently started to remember someone yelling at me ,"My son is dead because of you!"
.... Maybe because I know that the person who took me home was Seol Hui ?
As if a black box is being opened progressively.
You just disappeared while the neighbor mother was absent for a moment.
Her son went out looking for you but unfortunately he got into a car accident and died as a result.
It wasn't because of you.
I left you there only because you were deep intosleep and I didn't want to carry you all day.


My son died because of you - !
But it wasn't certainly your fault. I'd say it was my fault for not taking you with me.
The mother was livid, perhaps rightfully so.
Yeah, even if it was all accident... yeah...
I heard shouting. Is everything alright?
Seol Hui ?

Um..., we talked about my childhood.
... Forget it, girl, will you?
I am leaving now.
Come home during the break.
Don't thnk too bad about your brother's tuition.
I was going to help you out on tuition as well if all went well ...
But then... it didn't go well...
Sure...
I do know that I even lost your savings.
I feel really bad about it. Only if it weren't those scams...

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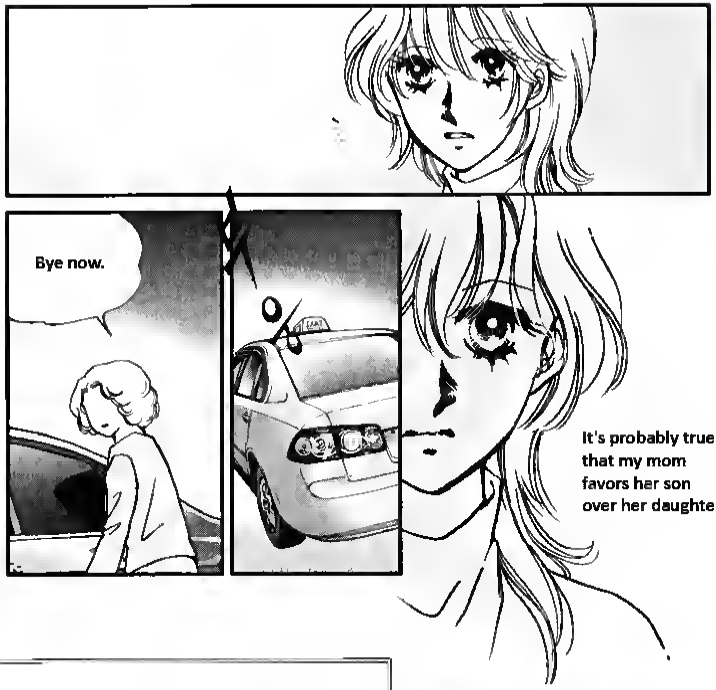
For the record, your brother asked me for help first, so I helped him out.
You've never asked for anything, so...
Well, he's out of the country, so the money is pretty much gone for sure.
But I did want to double your savings and help you out in the end...
The money can return if he is caught?
Yes, unless he somehow spent it all.
I'd be glad to see even half of what I lost return.

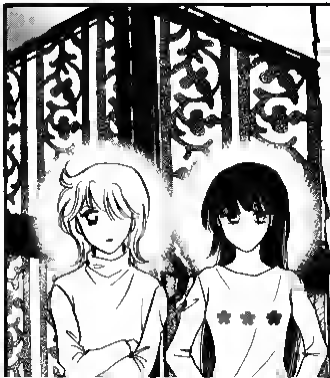
I know some are claiming that they are going to go after him regardless, but I am not counting on them.
I see.
.... I will call a cab.
Seol Hui, I will say again. Thank you.
I am not sure when I will be able to repay but I will repay.
Yes.
And thanks for taking Sera to a trip.
We could never afford to send our kids to a trip like that...



But I don't think she doesn't care about me

I should think like that probably, for my sake.

...The old memories ruined the mood for me.



Was It about the event you met me ?
Yeah ...
When I was on your isle, I kind of remembered something.
"My son died beause of you!" It was shocking.
And it turns out that a guy really died while looking for me.
After listening to that, I kinda feel responsible...
I guess that's why I had completely forgotten ...

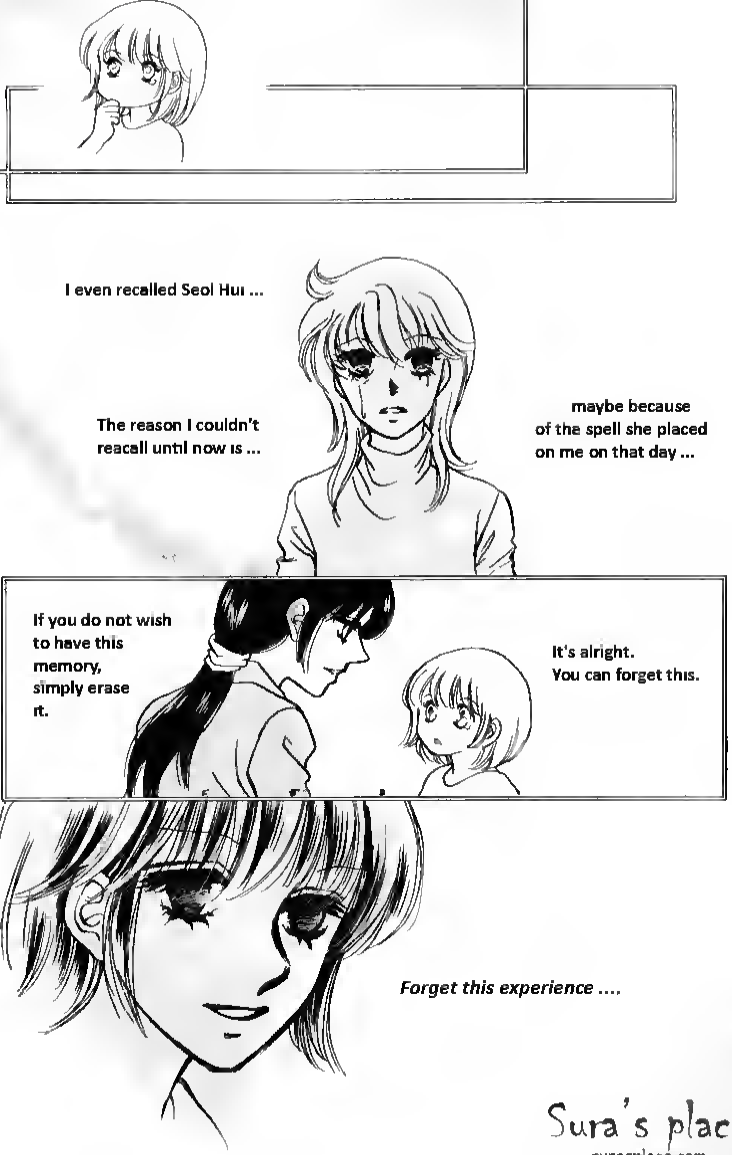
It was a family talk which means dirty details were taken out.
Rather than feeling responsible, would you rather know the truth ?
You aren't the 7 year-old kid anymore.
What?
I am absolutely positive that your mother did not tell you what the man tried to do to you.
She obviously would not tell you that he was trying to arouse you sexually and you ran away in response. He chased you and he got hit by a car.

When I found you, you did not want to go back.
You had also completely forgotte what happened already.
So, I took you to a police station
There is no one at home. I don't wonna go back
The neighbor man is touching me weirdly...
M... my memories...
You are starting to remmeber. I think the spell is finally starting to wear off now.
I think you are quite prone to hypnosis.

Hypnosis ?
What... is she talking about ?
He was probably too occupied about chasing you that he didn't see a car coming his way.
He really wanted to stop you from revealing what he did to you.
About what she said, yes, in her point of view her son was babysitting you and somehow he ended up dead while looking for you
I suppose she was within her right to yell at you like that You remembered what she told you at the police station
My son is deod becouse of you !
My memories...

Mommy
Where is mommy?
Where did she go ?
It's alright.
You can play
with me.
Your mom
will be back in
evening.
I... I wanna go home.
I have... my fairy tale
books there.
Stay still unless
you want to make
me angry.
NO - !
Hey !

My son is dead because of you !
Because of you !
He was simply babysitting you !
How dare you lie !
Are you implying that she should have stayed put and be sexually abused by your son?
That was only an accident.
Watch what you speak to a child.
어어어


I even recalled Seol Hui ...
The reason I couldn't reacall until now is ...
maybe because of the spell she placed on me on that day ...
If you do not wish to have this memory, simply erase it.
It's alright. You can forget this.
Forget this experience ....

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Forget it now ...

That was.... the spell.

Given the nature of the event, sexual harassment, your mother was obviosuly reluctant to tell you the truth.

Not only that a person died.

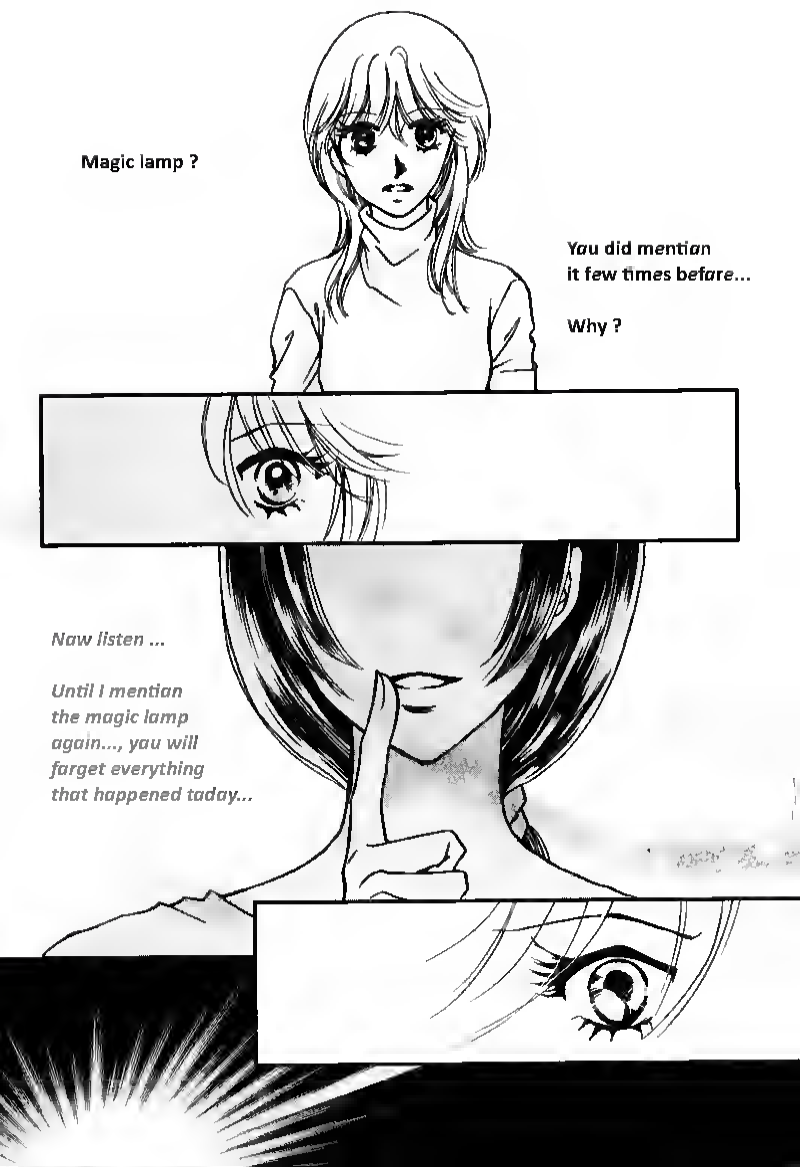
However, that was purely an accident. You had no part in his demise.

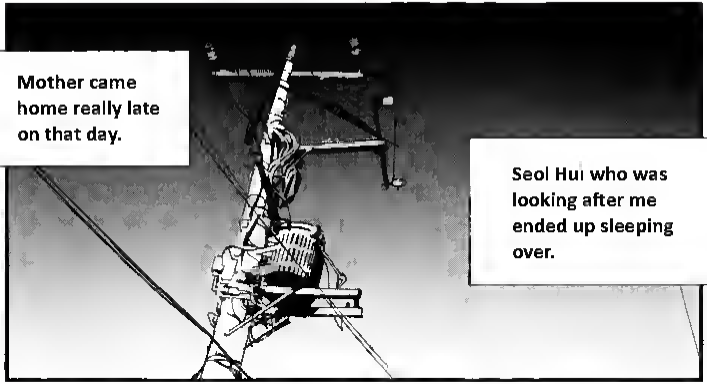
I was just glad that you ran away quickly.

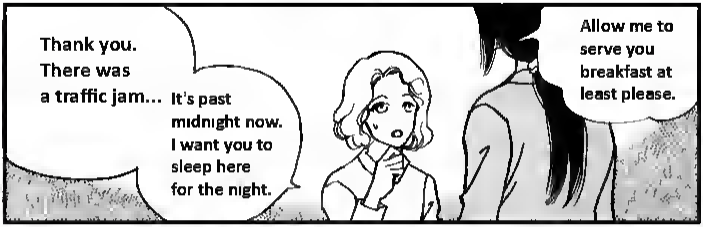
You know, I think you may have been smarter as a kid.

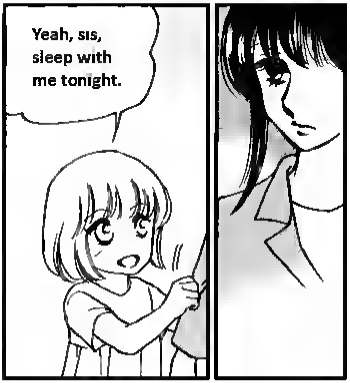
Thank you ...
Sure.
Make me tteokbokki if you are thankful.
....I am beyond that ... Thank you ...
Forget it now ..

You are like my guardian angel.
Thank God that you were there when it happened.
Let's have some tea.
More like magic lamp fairy.
Or Aladdin. Remember that?


Magic lamp ?
You did mention it few times before...
Why ?
Naw listen ...
Until I mention the magic lamp again..., you will forget everything that happened today...


Mother came home really late on that day.
Seol Hui who was looking after me ended up sleeping over.


Thank you. There was a traffic jam...
It's past midnight now. I want you to sleep here for the night.
Allow me to serve you breakfast at least please.


Yeah, sis, sleep with me tonight.

And she read me a fairly tale book on that night, I remember.
This ?
Anything -

Yes,
that book was about Aladdin.
My long lost memories are coming back to me so vividly ...
It must be why I started to recall my lost memories bits by bits.
There was probably a conflict between a part of me that wanted to know and another part of me who didn't want to know.
Wow, I wish I had this magic lamp.
It grants wishes !

Do you have a wish ?
If so, tell me.
Sis...,
can you visit
me again ?
That's not a wish.
Well, it's' not
wish-like.
I live afar.
Anything
you want.

도리 도리
No, my first wish is that you will visit me again.
Are you saying you have two more wishes?
Ah ?
You are like the Aladdin.
You showed up out of nowhere and helped me.
Promise me. You asked me for a wish first. Visit me again.

....A promise, huh
Very well
I shall visit you once more. While I cannot tell you when that will be, it will be within your lifespan.

... She came here
to see me...
She came here to keep
her promise ...
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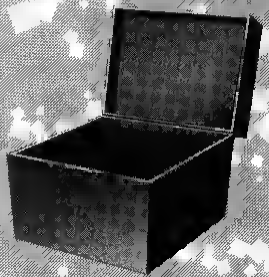
You... keep your promise well ...
Finally remembered?
Yeah...
A promise like that is easily forgotten, you know ...
Thank you... ... again.

It's one of few rules I have that keeps me occupied.
Primarily because I do not belong anywhere in this world.
She does not belong anywhere ?
Is that how she thinks about herself ?
Even when she stands here right in front of me ?

Regardless,

The blackbox is now opened and decoded, so to speak.

And it felt ... good as if some invisible burden has been lifted from my shoulders.



At the same time, I became excited.

Way, way, way too much happened today.

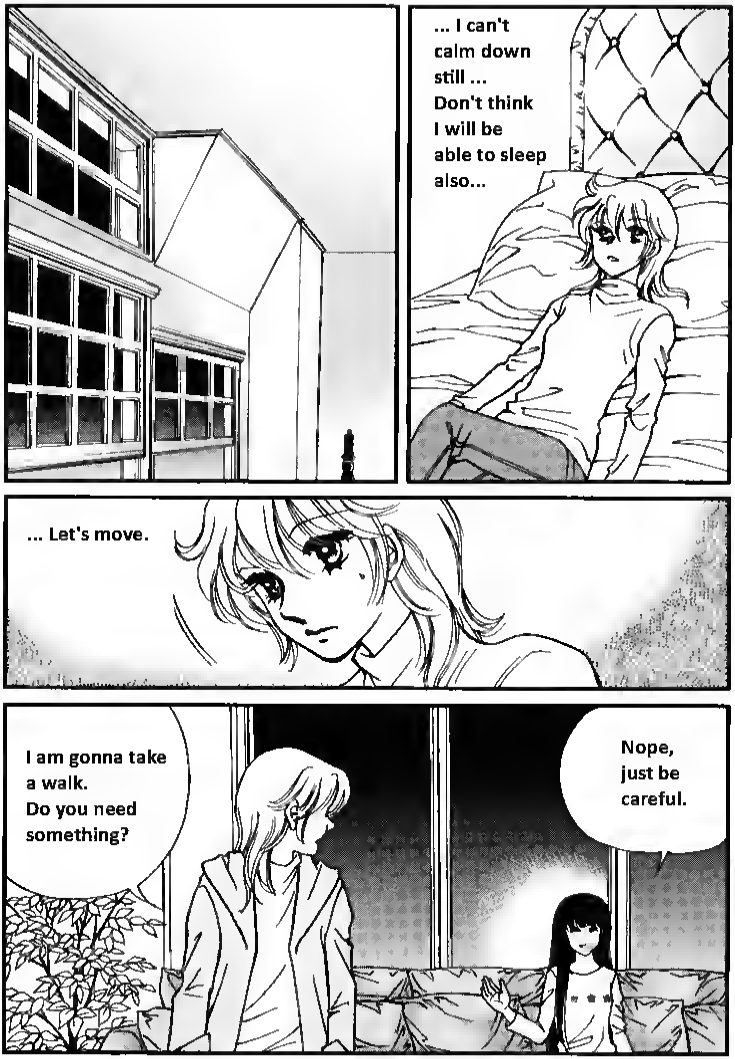
I feel like I need to ask you something.

But I can't think of any. And my legs feel numb.

Just lay down and rest.

Time will solve it for you.

Yeah...


... I can't calm down still ... Don't think I will be able to sleep also...
... Let's move.
I am gonna take a walk. Do you need something?
Nope, just be careful.

Ever since she came to see me, my life has been nothing but surprises after surprieses.
Even today, so much happened that I just can't take all in at once.

Despite of a fairly cold night in late January, I just had to do something.
I had just regained a lost part of my life and I just had to keep doing something to keep me occupied.

I walked
and walked.
And I thought about him.
And longed him.
Still walked.
I miss him ...

... When is he coming back?
I really miss him now...
Sera chan?
Going to a convenience store or something?

If you are heading back, feel free to ride the cab.
I ... missed him...
Sir, I am taking off.
TAXI 개인
부웅

What's wrong? What happened?
Are... you alone? I thought you were bringing somebody.
She is checking out tomorrow and head this way.
How was the trip ?
You must have had good time. Why tears?
I mised you.
I bet.
Couples tend to miss each other more after they break up.

I really...
Missed you ...
Yeah...?
Really...

뚜드
뚜드
뚜드

I see, Sera chan.
I felt comforting, yet disappointing from his response.
But -

Part 8. Black Box 2 -End of Part-

성의 8

강경옥

pop toon

설희 8

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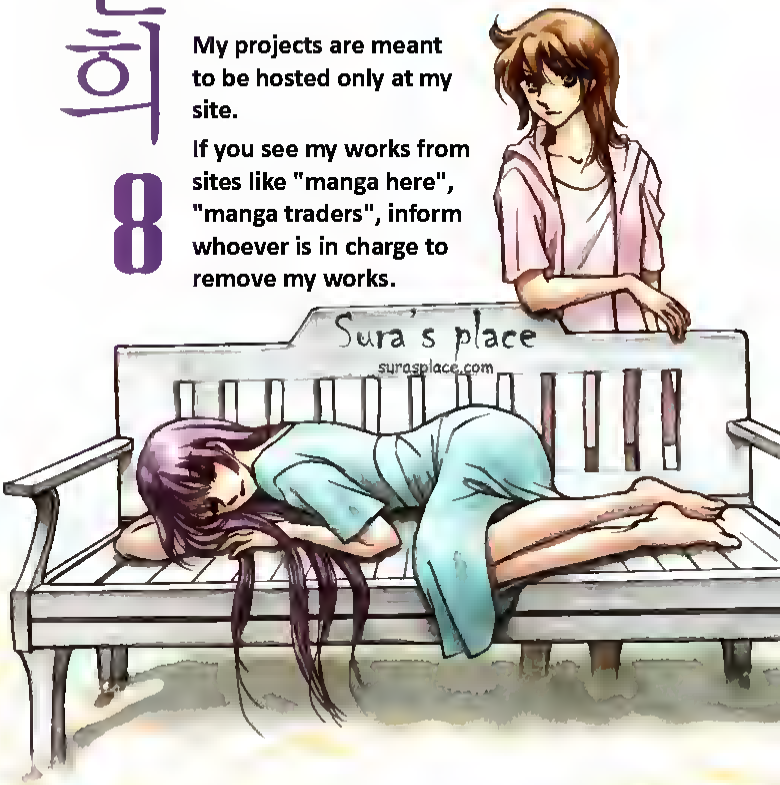

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